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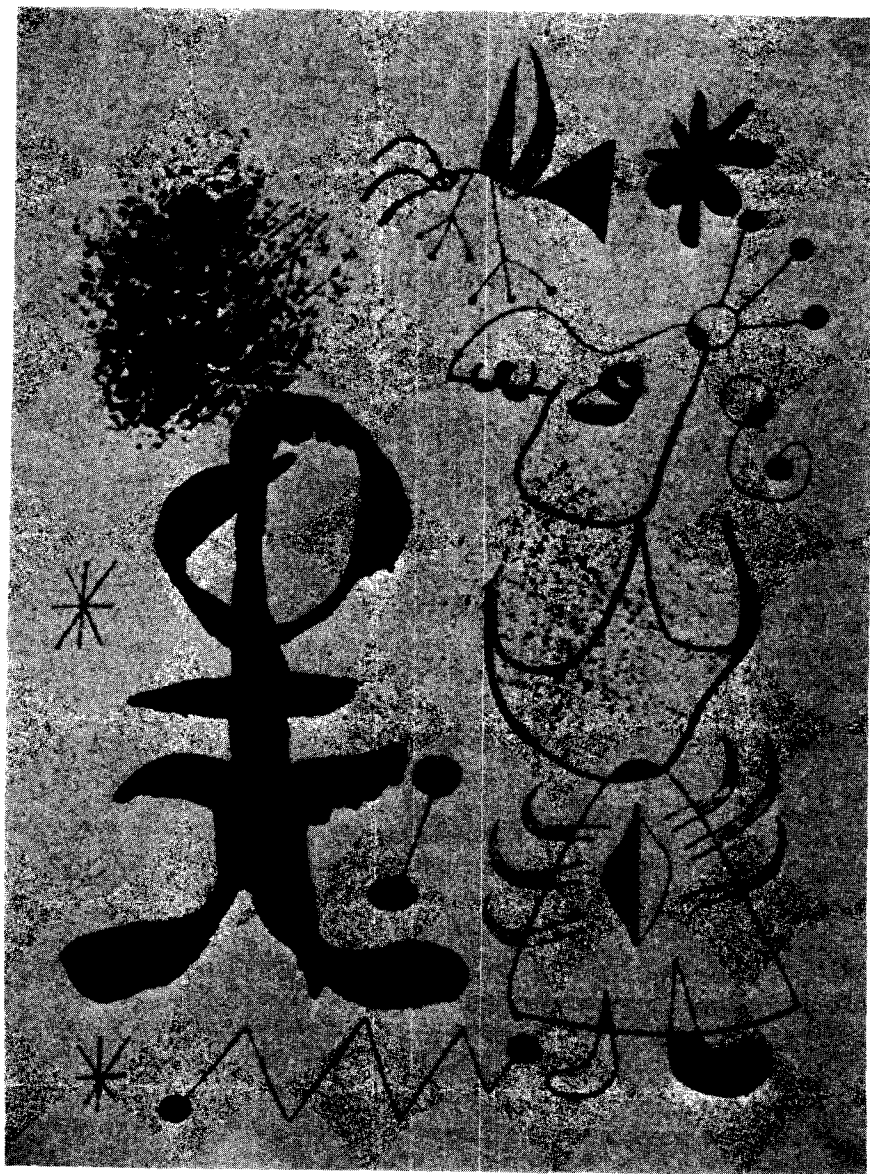
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JOAN MIRO: Lithograph, 1944

Courtesy Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York

The Colony

ISAAC ROSENFELD

I. SATYA AND THE INDEFATIGABLES

SATYA KNEW that his arrest was imminent.

For several months he had been living in a village on the outskirts of Allaban, the capital of the Central Province. Having adopted the way of life of the lowest peasants, he had established himself in a mud-hole. His hut had walls, ceiling and floor, but it deserved no better name than the one in the native language meaning mud-hole or hole-in-the-ground by which dwellings of this type were known. During the rainy season it was all but unbearably damp; in the dry season the heat grew intense and the walls chipped and needed constant patching with mud. A few slits served him for light and ventilation. A cotton rug lay on the floor, where Satya worked and slept. A stove and a row of cooking utensils occupied one wall; against another leaned a low couch on which he received visitors.

Three Indefatigables now guarded his door. They relieved one another at eight-hour intervals and contrived, somehow, to meet three times during the day—at sunrise, noon and sundown—when they would stand together uniformly tall and white, wearing the new furry headgear, their buckles gleaming with rising, high or declining light. When all three stood together they completely hid the house behind them.

No general orders for the arrest of party leaders had as yet been issued. The authorities were allowing the fifth-year general party meeting to be held in the Central Province, in the hope that a violent session, a public incident, or even a strongly-worded resolution would provide grounds for beginning the oppression. But, as every one knew, and as the higher, and therefore more cynical, officials admitted, they were desperate and might begin without pretext, if finding one demanded too long a wait.

During the week preceding the opening session, Satya busied himself with the preparation of his presidential address. He was of poor memory for all but his own words; while he could have reproduced nearly intact any speech he had ever delivered, he was always unable

to prepare a fresh one without the use of a library. And since he lived simply—in “ostentatious poverty” as he called it—and therefore kept neither reference works nor bound newspapers, he had found it necessary to apply to the district commander for permission to visit the library of Allaban.

The interview was humiliating. First, Satya was kept waiting in the antechamber while others—whites—who had arrived after him, were admitted to an audience with the commander. Then a secretary came out and informed him that, by a new ruling, natives were required to wait in the reserved antechamber. Satya was led behind a screen into a small, square, unventilated and unlighted room, where there were neither benches nor chairs. He was determined to stand, to bear indignity with dignity; but, his legs tiring, he squatted in a corner, and finally sat on the floor. As soon as his eyes had become accustomed to the darkness he discovered a row of mops and brooms hanging from the ceiling. The room, however, was not a porter's closet, but had rather been decorated to resemble one. This he ascertained by examining the mops and brooms and a stack of pails that he found in one corner; all were new and unused. There were also a pair of sandals and a mitten, such as a porter might wear.

An hour passed before he was admitted into the official chambers. The commander, receiving him, declared, “Satya, old boy!” attaining, thereby, a perfectly ambiguous insult. To call a native “boy” was to follow custom, while to speak his name, adding the adjective, “old,” was to indulge in a play at equality. Officials adopted either form of address, but only the highest used both; for while all whites were practiced in arrogance, only the elite had mastered ambiguity.

The commander did not let him begin. He insisted on showing Satya about his office, which was furnished as deliberately as the porter's closet. The commander dragged down an elephant's tusk that had been hollowed out and filled with gold, and urged Satya to “get the heft of it.” It was hefty and, as far as Satya was concerned, thoroughly disgusting; he was, if anything, even further humiliated. “Just throw it anywhere,” said the commander. “Here, I'm sure you'd like to see these gems.—Oh, I say, would you mind putting it back where it was? You can use that chair.” The commander, who was taller than Satya, had risen on his toes to reach the top of the bookcase. Satya did not remove his sandals before stepping onto the satin-covered chair; but he felt the petulance of his gesture, and he feared it had cost him dignity. The gems he was invited to see had been set in a hand-mirror to form the coat-of-arms of the mother country.

This, too, had been done with deliberate vulgarity. The commander shrugged his shoulders, as if to say, "We wouldn't normally go in for that sort of thing, but you people rather expect it of us." Observing Satya's displeasure, he remarked, "Perhaps a little inappropriate. You know, they come from one of your own temples. Forget which. Either in Bagputana or Charnadras. One that goes like this. . . . Middle period." He drew the outline of a temple in the air.

"I came," began Satya, "to . . ."

"Oh, do sit down, at once. Don't stand on ceremony." The commander offered him a cigar (Satya did not smoke); a drink (Satya did not drink). "Well, you know, it's been such a long time. You boys used to be much more communicative." He said this with an ambiguous wink, which may also have been the tic of a burdened administrator; the tone of his voice, however, was unmistakable. It was as if he had said, "Politics is politics, let's not delude ourselves. Instead of playing your silly old game, you could be holding down a good spot as a magistrate."

Satya, in an unfriendly, severe and formal tone, finally made his request. The commander, enjoying a paradox, replied that in an efficient society, where government fulfills its proper functions, even those elements who seek to destroy it must depend on it for support. "You want us to put our properties at your disposal," he continued, in weary and ironic condescension, "so you may write a speech that would send everything crashing down."

Satya remarked that the library at Allaban was hardly a government property, since all its books were in the native language, as the commander could ascertain by a visit; and that a speech intended primarily for the overthrowing of the government did not require research. One had only to say the obvious, with no more than natural emotion, to arouse, if one wanted, the most violent reaction. Satya, however, had to do some research, for his speech—and here, with his most insolent courtesy, he pretended to take the commander into his confidence, which was as insulting to the official as the latter's courtesy had been to the native—his speech was to survey the last five years, and he would find it very embarrassing if the party's younger intellectuals caught him in error while he reported events in which he himself had been prominent.

The commander smiled delicately as if to show that he, too, was acquainted with the ways of intellectuals. And, to demonstrate his superior irony he replied, repeating himself, "It's quite well that you come to us. By inviting government to participate in its own destruc-

tion, you learn to depend on it. And so you strengthen us. You are unable to take a step without us."

He therefore thought it would be unsporting to grant Satya's request. "Your tactics are wrong. I cannot—as one commander to another—" and here he raised his lip again, spreading the bristles of his moustache—"allow you to pursue such poor tactics. My good man, I must refuse!"

Satya therefore announced that he would proceed without permission. The years of self-discipline and control were in vain. He now felt himself growing angry and he knew that he was on the verge of haranguing the commander with a review of the party's history, and of recalling, to his complacently short memory, the number of times that the party had shaken the government by its disobedience movement and brought it to the verge of falling.

Party members had long since refused to bow themselves out of an official's presence. Satya stiffly walked away. "One moment!" the commander called after him. "Hey, boy! Not that door—out the other way!" Satya, disobeying, did not turn back.

In the courtyard he recognized two of his guards who had evidently followed him to the city. Thereafter, one of the three Indefatigables was detained at the mud-hole, while the other two, in furry headgear, accompanied him to the library, to the stacks and about the city in the blazing sun. As he sat and worked, one guard stood on his left, the other on his right. When he walked in the street one preceded him and the other followed. The Indefatigable at the head of the procession, never knowing which way Satya would turn, was constantly wandering off in the wrong direction or being left at street corners and always had to be recalled.

Ever since the death, some three years earlier, of Bapu, who had led the resistance party for nearly half a century, Satya had been the head of the movement. His official title was party president, which, in itself, meant little, for he had held the same office for ten years and, thus, while Bapu had still been alive. The old man had preferred to serve without office and had withstood all urging with his well known stubbornness, replying, when pressed, that he was obviously unfit for politics. "There is only one office for which my poverty qualifies me—treasurer," he had said on one semi-public occasion, at a conference of district leaders. Later, in private, Satya had reprimanded him. "Bapu, allow me to say, you take too much pride in your humility. You make it conspicuous."

"Dear boy," Bapu had replied, which was all he had to say, for his moral command over his followers was such that any one who accused him of pride thereby stood accused of greater pride. The old man had never failed to illustrate his beliefs through his own character. He had shown the extraordinary force that resides in gentleness, the obduracy of the sweet and self-effacing smile, the tyranny of sacrifice. While he had inspired the greatest love and reverence even in non-religious men, while simple souls had proclaimed him a saint, and complex, and more modern souls, had secretly agreed, he had, nevertheless, by a universal but timid acknowledgment, also been considered something of a crank. Thousands had willingly died for him, but never, thought Satya, without a trace, a spoor, a particle of resentment.

But Satya did not question his indebtedness to Bapu. He had accepted the doctrines laid down by the old man and defended them in the party. There was, in fact, very little criticism of Bapu's work. A few extremists, who had always dissented, argued that the growth of government oppression confirmed their views. But the majority of the party held that the old man's policy had been sound, and that no one could have foreseen, he least of all, the drastic changes in the country's administration that had been introduced after his death. The strategy Bapu had followed—refusing to call it a strategy, he had sought only moral justification for it—was correct not only morally, thought Satya, but politically. It was, he admitted, a curious political counsel that turned to a study of Scripture rather than economics; and yet, saintliness had succeeded where mere political shrewdness would have failed. No other doctrine would have gained such a large following among the superstitious and illiterate masses. Even the lowest peasants in the remotest corners of the country, men so degraded and stupefied by oppression that the most elementary significance of political struggle remained inaccessible to them, nevertheless venerated Bapu's name and, regarding him as a God, improvised through the devotions of a cult, some of the very measures he would have had them adopt by reason alone.

Bapu had feared in his youth that the country was not ready for liberation. Several times he had called off the resistance movement, doubting that his followers were prepared for the struggle. In his later years the old man had seen that freedom would not be achieved in his lifetime. It had, perhaps, been a kind of vanity—an extraordinary vanity, for no ordinary trait could find lodgment in an extraordinary character—that had led him, toward the end of his

life, to intensify the struggle. Some believed that he had died a disappointed, an outraged man. But, apparently, he had not expected to attain his goal. He knew he would die in the desert, a Moses; during the last period he had taken to calling Satya "Aaron."

But if the country was not ready for freedom now, it never would be. It is possible, thought Satya, that a nation's deepest need cannot be considered a responsibility. We are not yet ready to live as human beings, and yet we must live so. Freedom is more than a responsibility to men; it is a higher obligation, and while they may not be prepared to receive it, and to use it, they must, they absolutely must, live only to obtain it. The old man's teachings had therefore been wrong in assuming that there was ever a moment when men's readiness for freedom could be determined. But he had at least recognized that the need was always present; if he had preferred to wait, out of prudence, or out of a desire for moral perfection, he had nevertheless been wise enough to impose his restrictions at a time when prudence and perfection were still practical. But virtue had never been so impractical as it was now.

The new government—or the new administration—for the country had always been administered rather than governed—which took office during the crisis brought on by Bapu's death, soon proved itself to be no mere colonial bureaucracy. Where previous regimes had been cruel and corrupt, the present administration was only cruel. And if bureaucracies by nature are corrupt, they are known to be so only when approached with bribes. The bureaucracy that now held office made itself unapproachable, and therefore outwardly honest. But it was skilled in arithmetic, even if it refused to employ its talents in counting out bribes, and it followed the same thumb-to-tongue rule of carefully fingering the issues of state that its predecessors had observed in the traffic of banknotes.

Against the present, as against previous regimes, the party was carrying forth the non-violent struggle in which Bapu had instructed it. Essentially religious, an elaboration of the ancient faith, non-violence had, under the old man's guidance, made its way into politics. It was the only means, so the party intellectuals had reasoned, whereby, after the failures of all the violent struggles that had arisen in Europe and in parts of the East after the war, men might still attempt to attain a measure of decency, that is, moral success, as well as political success in the effort to free themselves.

Perhaps one needed religious capacity really to take non-violence to heart. But Satya was not a religious man. He had once in his youth

endeavored to learn Scripture and to follow the old religion in all its precepts. But he had begun too late, for the literature of the West was already read the works of European socialists. He understood the was still struggling with the first chapter of the Text, while he had already read the works of European socialists. He understood the destiny and the suffering of his country far better by looking to her socialist future than by considering her religious past. As for acquiring grace, he realized he would never learn the full list of sacred vegetables, or receive more than sentimental satisfaction from prayer. Even during the early period of his association with Bapu, which had been marked by incessant controversy, he had felt no need—a self-confidence rare among the old man's followers—to apologize for his Western instincts. He had accepted science; he believed himself a materialist, and he hoped that some day the country would be fully industrialized. And yet politics is politics, practical truth lacks symmetry and even the most consistent revolutionary is, at heart, a foe of progress. If, as he was convinced, a violent struggle was not feasible, if an unarmed country could never oust an armed oppressor by bloodshed, then one should be thankful for backwardness insofar as it is the condition of that country's liberation. For non-violence could draw on endless resources: poverty, misery, disease, humiliation, even ignorance and superstition. But what little supply of arms a violent revolution could amass would soon be exhausted; whereafter violence would be reduced to a useless expenditure of lives.

And then, was there any assurance even if the country were armed, that violence would prove a success? War after war had been fought, revolution after revolution—why, some revolutions had even been “successful”—but all they had ever accomplished might as well never have been attained, for a single war had wiped out every trace of enlightenment and left a ravaged and exhausted world, its strength squandered, its culture degraded, its men turned into beasts, whose only instinct now was to prepare for further violence. The West had died. All that had survived was what it had set out to destroy. The achievement of liberation and the establishment of a socialist society required a more reliable means than violence. And the only alternative to violence was non-violence.

There was also the desire for power, characteristic of all ruling groups. Satya had warned the people against the expropriation of power by their own party leaders in an anonymous article he had written, attacking himself. The authorship of the article was soon discovered and the word spread, but it had carried its point remark-

ably well; he had gained a greater confidence from the masses, to whom it appeared that a leader so well guarded against himself by humor, would never become a tyrant. But it took more than humor to curb the appetite. To tell the truth, he did not absolutely trust himself. "Perhaps," he had wondered, "I stooped to trickery. Hadn't I known that the article would soon be traced to its author and that this would make the country trust me all the more—that is, further disarm it against me?" Without the deepest, almost religious belief in the ends to which non-violence was dedicated, without the constant attempt to overcome the vanity and the greed, the desire for power and the other corrupting impulses to which the political leader was subject, he might even if he achieved his ends, easily transgress against them, and pervert the general gain into a private or a bureaucratic exploitation.

But was non-violence still possible? The present administration, while it had not yet fully shown what it was capable of, had already indicated that it was better prepared than its predecessors to protect the aims of government—to maintain the rule and not to yield. It had the advantage of freedom from public opinion in the mother country. There the oppression had already been instituted. Under the guise of rebuilding the national economy the whole country had been subjected to military discipline—or rather, the war in which it had been engaged for seven years had never been declared at an end. The army and the navy were maintained at full fighting strength. Trade unions were regulated and long hours were still exacted from factory workers, with strikes forbidden. All expression of protest was gradually curbed, and finally stifled. Parliament had not convened in three years and no election had been held in more than a decade. Political parties had been realigned for the duration of the "national emergency"—which meant that they had all been placed under the control of the political council so that, while they differed in name, they now had the same leadership. Moreover, "experimental prisons" had been introduced and were rapidly overflowing with subjects for experiment. For the first time in history, a colony found itself not much worse off than the mother country.

The administration had good reason to fear its own ambitions. The colony was so vast that, at least until recently, there had not been enough arms at the government's disposal to coerce even an unarmed population. Millions of rounds of ammunition (their calculations must have amazed the government statisticians) would be needed to enforce the same discipline upon the colony that the mother country

already enjoyed. Nor were there enough sites available for experimental prisons, which required large tracts of land in the less populous regions of the country, suitably drained and reclaimed. The administration had therefore embarked upon an intensive land development project in the northern provinces, improving for slavery the earth that it had considered good enough for freedom. Altogether, it was a tremendous task, requiring careful and extensive preparation. For, by the official census, covering the last ten years, the population of the country stood well in excess of 400,000,000—and this, despite some 35,000,000 deaths, attributed to the famines that had occurred during the same period.

It was understandable that the administration should show some reluctance to proceed with the oppression.

The district leaders, meeting in Allaban in pre-convention conference, were in very low spirits. Abvan Singh, Dr. Ramdas Sodha, and Givot Pandalamchari who had journeyed (third class) from the Northern Province, were especially pessimistic as they gave their reports of the preliminary steps the administration was taking to incite the Resistance Party to violence. Several provocations had occurred in the North, the most serious being a charge of rape brought, curiously enough, against a white surveyor by a group of farmers and a white tax collector. The surveyor, who had recently arrived in the district and had not yet made any enemies, was accused of criminally assaulting a native woman, the wife of a tenant farmer. Her body had been found mutilated and several days dead in an irrigation ditch. The surveyor had concluded his work and was about to return to the Central Province when he was arrested and held in a local jail, some forty miles from the nearest court where criminal proceedings were usually heard. The jail was in Lokhamadra, a city of fair size, known for its jute industries. The body of the woman was also taken to Lokhamadra, some twenty-five miles away from her own village, on the outskirts of which the alleged crime had occurred. This was an irregular procedure, since the local police in the town of Bhingat, only three miles away, was of adequate size to conduct a preliminary investigation and the facilities of a morgue and coroner were available there. The dead body had been placed in an open car, exposed to the view of the natives, and had slowly been driven through the streets of Bhingat and of the other towns on the way to Lokhamadra. The news had meanwhile been broadcast and as the body approached Lokhamadra, an angry crowd began to gather. By the

time the dead woman reached Lokhamadra, the whole city was aroused; demonstrations were held in the bazaar, in the native quarter and in the public squares. The body, scantily guarded, was left in the open for several hours. The delegates from the North considered it remarkable that no violent incident occurred.

The surveyor meanwhile had been placed, not in the large jail outside the city, but in a small police station in the bazaar where the natives soon discovered him. It was apparent that no precautions had been taken against a public uprising. Some believed that the station's normal complement of police had been dismissed; others, that they had fled in fear. Whatever the case, the jail had been unguarded. The accused, who was in an outside cell, could easily have been reached from the street. But here, too, the people had restrained themselves and there was no violence, although several natives, who were later shown to be provocateurs, had tried to incite the crowd.

No storm had broken, for which the party was thankful; but apathy and resentment had not been dissipated. A strange mood had come over the people. They were completely unconcerned in the trial (the murdered woman's funeral had been sparsely attended); and yet they showed an unprecedented bitterness. They knew even before the party had been able to point it out to them, and even before the trial proceedings had established it beyond doubt, that the government had arranged the entire incident as a deliberate provocation. And while they had maintained perfect calm after the initial demonstrations, it was a calm—so bitter was it—that could exist only in the absence of a means of reprisal. Which had given to the party leaders an indication of the danger now present in the mood of the people, and to the administration whatever success it had achieved in the affair. The trial itself had been dismissed when the authorities saw that they had overplayed their hand and had nothing more to gain. The surveyor had disappeared, returning, so it was believed, to the mother country where he received a promotion in the civil service.

The delegates were now debating whether to bring the incident before the party. The news had not, of course, reached the other provinces, and had in fact not been known outside an area of some 600 square miles in the densely populated Northern Province. Satya advised the delegates to place the affair on public record, to warn the people that they would soon be exposed to similar provocations and incitements to riot. It would also show how strong and efficient the censorship had become, when it could arbitrarily restrict information to a single region, and yet use every means of public dissemi-

nation—radio, newspaper and rumor—to spread that information throughout the area.

All had incidents to report; and all having, naturally, traveled third class, they had been subjected to the usual humiliations with a few new annoyances, such as having to fill out in triplicate the lengthy travel applications at each government inspection station they had passed. (Some had encountered as many as twenty stations on the way, had missed their trains and been held over for days without accommodations. The papers had previously been carried by the traveller from origin to destination. The new ruling, which had never been published, and which, the delegates were certain, had been applied only against them, required that a complete set be made out at the beginning and surrendered at the end of each stage of the trip.)

The delegates spoke freely of their fears, confessing to Satya that, in Bapu's time, they had never known such pessimism. He felt no jealousy, no resentment. He had already known this to be true, and had himself shared in the general depression, the grief over losing a leader whom, he freely admitted, he himself could never replace. Nor did he remind them, in self-defense, that the administration had changed since Bapu's time. What colored man did not know this?

A few of the delegates had been placed, with Satya, under preliminary, or ambulatory, arrest and could go nowhere without the company of Indefatigables. Satya's own guard had been reduced by the removal of one of the soldiers—the one who had gone in advance of the procession and had never known which way to turn. The remaining Indefatigable now walked at Satya's side, the better to be seen. He had acquired the white man's usual arrogance. In private he called Satya "boy." But in public, whenever they passed a group of white officers in the street, he would find some reason for addressing Satya by name while the officers were still within earshot. Once, while they were abroad on a hot afternoon, he removed his headgear, wiped his forehead and forgot himself to the extent of uttering a word of criticism of the administration that made him wear fur in summer. Satya also forgot himself and remarked, in all friendliness, and with an unforgivable assumption of equality—if not of actual superiority—that the soldier could consider himself fortunate that he was not stationed in the mother country, where his duties would have been more severe and degrading, since he should have had to oppress his own people. The soldier replaced his headgear, lengthened his stride and, prodding Satya along with his stick, re-

minded him that familiarity with the armed forces was not permitted to natives.

He was a fair young man of the blond type that turns red and irascible in the tropics; the sort of man who disintegrates as a person and is held together only by the external restraint of his uniform, without which he would go mad. The sweat that poured down his forehead had caused sores to break out among the sparse, fine, colorless hairs of his eyebrows; sticking flies troubled him. The skin under his headband was raw, and a vein beat in his throat. The Indefatigable grew more and more arrogant, showing his authority on the least provocation. He required Satya to open doors for him and to stand in the blazing street while he rested in the shade; envying the freedom of Satya's loose clothes, the full unbinding trousers and the thin homespun jacket, he tried to impose military posture upon him, prodding his shoulders with his stick whenever Satya slouched, and ordering him to keep in step. The soldier wore boots; Satya wore sandals and his feet were soon blistered.

Public comfort stations were unavailable to colored men who had to use segregated and foul latrines, containing narrow stalls without doors and large open wooden troughs that absorbed the odor of urine. (All natives carried "toilet-cards," long strips of cardboard, ruled off in squares, which they had to insert in stamping machines that stood at the entrance.) The soldier, on the same day that he had forgotten himself and criticized the administration in Satya's presence, accompanied him to the latrine—a measure of the reinforced discipline he should now have to suffer. Satya, knowing he had never entered a native latrine, warned him of the unpleasantness. But men who had recently come from the mother country showed a curious avidity for pain. The Indefatigable went in and stood guard over him. Later, feeling the need to relieve himself, he made Satya come with him into a comfort station—tiled and white, equipped with washstands and electric dryers. Before entering one of the spacious stalls, he made Satya lock himself into the adjoining one, ordered him not to use it, to remain standing, and under no circumstances to step out until given permission to do so.

2. THE LAST FREE MEN

The meeting began shortly after sunrise, with a mass prayer during which all the delegates knelt, facing the sun. The people were

assembled in a large field, a natural theatre shaped like a saucer with a broken rim, which was closed on three sides by a rise of ground and shallow at the farther end where the platform had been raised. Over the shallow the sun rose, and as those who knelt faced the sun, they seemed also to be praying to the leaders on the platform, the party's banner and the cloth streamers, covered with slogans in all the native dialects, that were strung along the trees. This put a taint of idolatry upon the prayer, confusing religion with politics in a manner which Satya, who sat on a dais and therefore seemed to be the object of worship, found extremely distasteful. But it could not be helped; even practical circumstances contributed their share to the confusion. Thus, the fact that the shallow depression happened to lie directly in the path of the rising sun, could not stand against its selection as the best site for the platform. There was a similar confusion in the country itself, a complexity and a tangle, an imperfection and intermingling of chance and necessity, tradition and hazard, which put truth beyond all simple utterance, made irony inevitable and molded even the narrowest will into a product of contraries.

Satya sat with his legs folded under him, his thighs forming a deep bay—the traditional human lap of generation and reception, which even the earliest gods had learned to imitate. So, level with the earth, they had poured forth their seed into furrows and valleys and in return, received human offering, having discovered that this was the best position for the intercourse they held with men. The language in which the hymns were sung had once been a human language, but now forgotten, it had become divine. So, too, the spreading of genital laps in the sign of nature pointed to a discontinued intercourse, and the gods, who were all split beings, owing half their existence to nature and half to man, had become one, as the dirt of the soil and the mark of human handiwork had disappeared. They had entered reality, acquiring their own natures, because, and this was all Satya would grant to the sacred metaphysic, reality, as it was forgotten, retreated behind successive veils, spun out of threads which men still held in their hands. It is what we put away from us that becomes real, not what we handle and use. That which dies acquires its own life.

Children were singing the hymns. They were ranged around the platform many rows deep, their heads bowed, their hands clasped at their breasts, their white gowns and bare feet, with dully shining nails, making a natural uniform. The blue-black straight glossy hair of the girls, parted in the middle, was bisected by rows of white scalp and

tightly drawn back in braids forming a pattern as of loaves or folded wings. They sang the sacred words not understanding them. Overhead fluttered the banners and the political slogans—land, bread, freedom, self-rule—these, too, words of a litany.

Satya neither prayed nor sang. His dry lips moved from time to time, without forming syllables. His expression as usual was melancholy, his large eyes, staring, the lines around his mouth drawn into their habitual cast of pity or pain. He was now completely gray and his complexion had an ashy undertone, combining the pale olive of nature with the infirmity of jails. He was at once impatient and in repose, absorbed in himself yet conscious of the crowd, withholding from prayer in the expression of his individual conscience and yet, thereby, contributing to his public image. It was the division of the inner and outer man, inseparable from political life, both a conflict and a poise, neither wholly private nor wholly public, for neither in itself was whole. Thus, he could look at the scene about him, enjoy its color, enjoy the spread of caps and turbans, the crossed legs and arms, the deep almost coal-black of the southern people, the lighter skins and finer features of the men from the North—all this he could enjoy, and also the profusion of banners and flags, the costumes of the various castes, the physical conformation of the tradesmen and artisans, the stunted, homogenous bodies of the peasants—he could feel himself part of this crowd and participate in its being, where he should merely have been a spectator. Yet, knowing their misery, their humiliation, recognizing signs of disease, malnourishment and deformity, knowing also the ignorance of the people, he felt himself withdrawn, observing where he should have been moved to participation through sympathy. Bapu had never suffered the complexities of a divided nature. His faith had been whole, proceeding without deviation from the heart; his life and his work were identical. His spirit had never varied, never turned in on itself, or fled, leaping out. He had not known what it meant either to love the crowd or to stand off from them. Bapu had sat before them, his legs turned under, his lap spread out, and the dirt of the soil and the mark of handiwork—both visible—were one.

And yet Satya could feel a simple, positive joy, not to be subtilized, when he rose on the platform at the conclusion of the singing and received the ovation of the delegates. It was the joy of being with his people and of discovering again, in the moment of pride, who he was and what he was, when the inner life, expanding, merged with the outer and proved itself equally great. Then all humiliation was

forgotten, all doubt and all fear. The warmth of the moment superseded consciousness and in an instant the public devotion, overleaping politics, met its reward out of time. The country was a nation, free, its ends accomplished.

It was only a metaphorical joy. A cordon of police had been drawn around the crowd. In the distance, coming down the slope of the outer range of hills, could be seen another troop of provincial police, and several magistrates, riding on elephants.

"Comrades," he began, "I am aware that your prayers were offered lovingly for one who was with us five years ago, at our last general session, and who today is no more." His voice was loud and high; it reached clearly to the edge of the crowd. "I join you in that prayer. No one has known better than I how great a loss was the death of Bapu." He knew that his mind would take up its accustomed critical position, a little to the left of him—he felt it actually in terms of space—and run a commentary on his words. Already he was aware of duplicity—he had spoken of "joining in prayer" when, as everyone knew, he never prayed, and in his very first reference to Bapu he had inserted the words "at our last general session," as if he were careful to grant Bapu no more than his due and to restrict attention to the present and therefore to himself, by withholding complete reverence. "It is my painful duty to correct a misconception." (These words had not been prepared, but had sprung out of the tension created by the preceding statement.) "Some have paraphrased the speech I delivered at Bapu's funeral as a sigh of relief. Some of you have even put my message into the language of modern advertising: 'Now watch our speed!' or, 'watch how we go on from here!' Nothing is further from the truth. You will recall that I said: 'Though this loss is inevitable, it is one from which we may never recover. It may also be inevitable that we fail.'" (He was aware of the pride he was taking in his memory.) "I should repeat those words today. I cannot recall a general party session which met under more unfavorable, more threatening circumstances." He described a wide arc with his arm to accompany these words; his hand swept over the line of soldiers and police ringing the crowd. The magistrates had dismounted from their elephants and had been brought, in golden sedans, carried by natives, to points of vantage on the surrounding hills. The administrators—governors, commanders and bureaucrats—sat in a small grandstand at the side of the field shaded by large squares of bamboo, which, when worked with ropes, could serve also as fans.

"But it is true that I should like to hurry you, our time is running

short. I do not want our steps to be ill-chosen; they must be firm and wise. I do not recommend recklessness in the name of action; we must now more than ever consider the wisdom of our policy, question it, improve it, increase it. But we must act and we must act quickly. We will soon have to face the greatest crisis in our struggle for liberation. The oppressor stands ready to strike his blow, and ours, too, must be prepared!"

Satya took the applause of the crowd with his accustomed sternness, standing erect and unyielding, as if to show that he could out-face all emotion; he was the mover who would not in turn be moved. His glance passed beyond the people and rested on the cordon of police and soldiers, which had been increased and drawn up several rows deep along the edge of the meeting. He could make out the native interpreters busily translating his speech to members of the administration. Some of the administrators were deaf, and their interpreters kept bending down to relay the translation directly into their ears. At the edge of the platform he recognized his Indefatigable, who was boasting to a group of his fellows, stamping his heels, tossing his furry headgear and pointing at Satya. Today the Indefatigables were all armed with carbines.

As the applause was dying out, one of the natives near the platform noticed the troops that had been stationed at the edge of the crowd. He called out, "Long live Satya!" and pointed to the police. The crowd at the shallow end of the field, their attention drawn to the surrounding troops, redoubled their applause and also raised the shout, "Long live Satya!" They rose to their feet and surged forward, applauding in the native manner with their arms extended over their heads and their palms meeting stiffly. They were awkward at applause; it was only at political meetings that they found occasion for it. But they were in the habit of expecting miracles, and their eyes, as they looked up to Satya, were full of a wild and unreasonable hope which—arousing both his pride and his displeasure—declared him their savior. He raised his hand for silence.

The next part of his speech drew no applause, but called out murmurs, sighs, expressions of pity and sympathy and cries of outrage. He reviewed briefly the outstanding events of the preceding five years, the gains the party had made and the activities in which it had engaged. It was this part of his speech that he had carefully prepared, and he put on a pair of spectacles while he read it. His voice was pitched lower than before, modulated to avoid dullness, more closely resembling his natural tone and lacking the inflections of the agitator.

Then he turned to describing the growth of government oppression. He removed his spectacles, put aside his notes and raised his voice again. It rang out to the edge of the field as he spoke of the insults and humiliations that the colored people had suffered; he spoke of the provocations in the North, telling in some detail of the false case the government had built against one of its own underlings, and his voice was full of indignation; he described the efficient working of the censorship and warned against future provocations, and his voice dropped and took on the well-practiced and sustained sinister tone, the slow and crafty and evil intonation, sibilant and harsh, that mimicked the oppressor's evil. The crowd responded as a body, expressing its anger, murmuring or crying out its protest. The little girls who had sung the hymns now wailed in distress, and Satya paused at appropriate moments to let them mingle their young voices with the grief of their elders. The sun rose and the heat of the morning increased. Satya sweated, and the crowd sweated with him. The natives were now pulling on the sheets of bamboo that hung over the grandstand.

"And what have they?" he cried out, his voice once more hard and clear in its anger, "what have they in their own country?" He wheeled sideways, and stood with his left shoulder and arm raised, his right arm drawn back—the pose of a javelin thrower about to let hurl at the crowd. "What of their boast that they have abolished poverty and disease and unemployment? What of the promises they hold out to us? I have thanked them for their good intentions—I have expressed the people's gratitude to them. We say: No, thank you! Far happier is our own wretched peasant with his acre of unproductive ground and his blistered hands, with his broken back and cut and bleeding feet—far happier is he, so long as he resists their rule, than anyone of their own well-fed and athletic race who submits to it! We say: No! Little do they realize that the crust of freedom which we treasure with our sacred hunger is better and richer and purer than the soft, white poisoned bread that they must eat. What are their goods to us?—the corruption of riches, the greed that fastens on the land, the lust and the luxury in which the few wallow and in the envy of which the many are ground unto death. We know what their goods are, and we are not lured by them. We say: No! We say: your poverty persists in spite of all your efforts to abolish it, and it always will persist. It persists in your movie houses, where, not the bright screen, but the darkness of the theatre truly mirrors the life you lead. It persists in your levers and cranes, your contrivances and

inventions, with advertisements of which you have filled our newspapers. How like you! How like you to enslave a people, then show them advertisements of labor-saving devices! We must say: No! Your poverty persists in the poisonous fruits of your industries, your instruments of destruction, your bombs and your guns, your rockets and flame-throwers, your ships that prowl under the ocean and your trains that fly through the air. And what is the standard of living of which you boast, the material wealth that you accumulate? To us, they are the instruments of death, even as the bombers bring death. To our clearer eyes, your civilization is dying and the agony you now suffer, the discipline and the dictatorship, the cruelty of your prisons, the brutality of your cities, the vast cemeteries into which you have converted all that was fertile in your life, all that was humane in culture and productive in industry—all this prolonged dying is but the final torment of the initial disease: the degradation of man. We say: No! Even as slaves, we have more freedom than our masters. Even if we knew that this was to be the last day, the last hour, of our present misery, we would still prefer it to your way—we would rather have our misery than be damned by your blessing! We have chosen between your life and ours, and our answer is: No! We say: No!”

“No!” cried the crowd.

“No!” cried Satya. “No! No! No!”

And the crowd answered him: “No! No! No!”

He paused during the outcry, and seeing how he had aroused the people, he let down his arms, and stood empty handed, discarding the javelin. He wiped the sweat from his face, adjusted his cap, which had nearly slipped from his head, and waited for the demonstration to subside. When he began speaking again, his voice was lower and calmer, as if he regretted having played on the people’s emotions and felt he had done them an injury.

“We must observe what the real issues of politics are. They have to do not only with obtaining freedom, but with discovering freedom—with discovering what are the bases, in spiritual independence, of the freedom we would build on earth. Our whole life, had we time enough, would be a constant choosing and rejecting, a connoisseurship pursued among truths and falsehoods.” He was aware that he had indulged his fancy, and knew that he must restrain himself. The effect was pleasing, but the term “connoisseurship” was questionable and he was surprised that he should, at this moment in his life, suddenly hit upon an esthete’s affectation. “But we must make practical choices, and even the ideal ends that we set for ourselves must have practical

justification. Thus, we must again consider whether non-violence, to which we are pledged, is practical. Moreover a dying world looks to us for a way out of the undying horrors to which its perpetual injustice has doomed it. We must be sure that non-violence, our weapon, will not fail us, and will not fail the earth's oppressed millions who look to us for help."

He missed the tension of the crowd, and while he had resolved not to let himself be carried away by fervor—which was no more than the desire to hear his name shouted—he looked once more at the ranks of soldiers on the field, the administrators in the shaded grandstand, the magistrates on the hills, and Satya scowled at the visible oppressor, as if to recharge his energy for another leap at the crowd.

"The world looks to us for a way out. What shall we do? Shall we take up arms? Forget for a moment that we are pledged to peace, that all our aspirations and the very history of our movement forbid it. Consider—where would we get arms? We have no industry. And if we nevertheless acquired arms, what would we do? Our numbers are large—but there stands an army, already assembled and trained to kill. It is an army equipped with planes and tanks and fast armored cars. It is ruthless, it recognizes no check of conscience or public opinion against its fury. Had we resorted to arms and violence in the past, when the oppressor was relatively weak—that is, when he had a conscience—we should now, perhaps, be prepared to venture the struggle. But it is too late. Our decision has been made—and, I say, wisely! We have only the naked force of our faith, our persuasion, with which to defend ourselves. We are equipped to resist evil only with the knowledge of what evil is, and we must conquer violence even as we abhor it!

"But will they not ride over us and trample us down? Will they not drop bombs and containers of gas, strafe us from the air, murder us ruthlessly on the unprotected ground? What defense is there against death, carefully, scientifically prepared? There is no defense—but one—willingness to die!" He was again raising the javelin. "Consider our thousands of martyrs who faced machine gun fire, who marched, singing their defiance and chanting their prayers, holding the holy images aloft, directly into the path of rifle and cannon! Consider the thousands who were massacred and beaten and burned—the centuries of violence we have already withstood, without fear, without losing courage, and without once failing, in the end, to wrest the instrument of death from the hands of the oppressing soldier and send it dashing to the ground.

"Consider the sacrifices of the great Bapu" (a shout rose at the mention of his name), "the saint who lived among us, how his frail body endured torment after torment, languished in prison, lay starving and tortured, and how, always defiantly, he sprang again to the head of our ranks, to reaffirm our faith and to lead our struggles. Consider these things, and then ask yourselves: are you willing?"

"Willing!" roared the crowd.

"Then this is what you must do!" cried Satya, without waiting for the shout to die down. "This is what you must do!" He threw his voice over the roar of the crowd. "Disobey! Adhere to our disobedience program, but extend it. Extend it into every corner of your lives. Do not recognize their language. When they issue a command in their own tongue—when one says, 'Open the door' or 'Get off the street,' do not understand, do not obey. When the signs say 'whites only' in the comfort station, in the theatre, in the park, do not read, do not understand, do not obey. Also when the sign says 'natives only'; and as for facilities that are put at the public's disposal without regard to color, to native or foreigner, ruler or ruled, do not use them. We all wear clothes of our own manufacture, refusing to touch what their hands have spun. So, also, must we avoid them. Not only must you disobey overt commands, you must avoid even unconscious opportunities for obedience and cooperation. Just as the touch of Midas turned all things into gold, so must your touch make all things anarchic. Disobedience is our gold. Disobey! Refuse to return or recognize the nod of condescension in the street, the luxury of friendly greeting with which the administrator pampers you. Do not hold out your hand to the fallen, raise your cap to the lofty, bow to the powerful. Despise and disobey!"

"Despise and disobey!" cried the crowd, recognizing a new slogan.

The troops had begun to move. Several groups had marched, rifles slung, onto the hills and taken up commanding positions. The administrators in the stands had dismissed the translators and had gathered together, conferring among themselves. Native runners, naked except for loin cloths and turbans to which their badges were pinned, could be seen leaving the field, bearing messages in official envelopes. The native pullers had been disaffected by Satya's speech; they now refused to operate the ropes, which they had left swinging idly over the stands. A few of the bamboo squares stood upright overhead, balancing in the wind, and casting no shade.

"You have learned disobedience of the major laws—governing

taxes and rent, and property rights," Satya went on, his voice high and piercing and beginning to crack. "Now you must learn and put into effect disobedience toward the entire social structure. Disobedience of the minor laws and of the unwritten laws; disobedience of the assumptions of society. They have a community among us, and we must destroy their community by withholding recognition, by withholding consent, by withholding respect even for the most elementary pledges that they put upon us. Do not recognize their forms of life! Do not acknowledge the common air and the sun they share with us! Uproot them thoroughly from your consciousness, from your fear, your concern. Deprive them of being, of the human support that even the most degraded heart requires. They will be unable to go on living in a country where they no longer exist!"

His speech had overwhelmed the critical position from which his mind had run a commentary. It now gave assent to his words. "That was a good line. Use it again. No, no, I am not jeering at you. I am with you."

"Do all this without hatred," continued Satya, feeling he owed the injunction to his inner self in return for its consent. "Hatred is a form of cooperation, a form of recognition, the opposite of love, but just as binding. Do not hate. Steel yourselves! Be cold. Again, not the coldness of fraudulence or of suppressed heat that burns within. Be cold as their prisons are where the sun never falls. Be cold as the wall is when the light is shut off. Emit no light!

"And so will you defeat them. An army conquers only another army that cooperates with it in murderous enterprise. But a disaffected people, a thoroughly alienated people, above all a people who are not afraid to die, and who stand only to fall, is a greater army and it employs a weapon that none can withstand. We have an abhorrence of killing and of blood—but not of our own blood. If it must be shed, it must be, as it has been shed before. I demand this of you. I will be harsher with you than Bapu was, and drive you to that extreme before which he always hesitated. The time is short and the time demands it. We will attain the extreme of non-violence, where it transcends all violence and overcomes all force, becoming itself the greatest force!"

At the mention of Bapu's name, the crowd rose to its feet and took up the cry "Bapu, Bapu, Bapu!"

"Despise and disobey!" cried Satya, again raising his voice above the crowd and redirecting their attention to himself.

"Despise and disobey!" chanted the crowd, crying out their new slogan.

To despise, he thought, checking himself as he was leading the delegates in the chanting of the slogan, to despise is also to hate, and therefore to be bound. Self-criticism had tricked him by consenting to his vanity.

"Now this is the duty that I charge you with," he cried, making a final attempt at self-justification through rhetoric. "Be brave! Remember your responsibility not only toward your country but toward the world! The world looks upon you as its only hope! You, the enslaved, are the last of the free men, and knowing this, you shall not fail in your effort to create the new society!"

It was the demonstration of the crowd rather than his own effort that reassured him and put him at peace. He stood on the platform, stern as before, but smiling inwardly. "It was a good speech," he thought, and yet he did not think this, for to think would have been to recreate the division in himself between inner and outer man. The applause of the delegates, the singing of the girls, the high adoration and the hope as they all looked up to him, told him that he was one—at one with his own words and at one with the duty to which he had called his countrymen.

But even as the demonstration was going on, amid the applause and the singing and shouting, the surging forward in joy, shots were fired which at first were lost in the noise of the crowd. Then men began to fall and the shouts became screams. A panic broke out as the riflemen on the hill fired down their volleys and as the cordon of police began drawing in on all sides, also firing on the crowd. Simultaneously a troop of Indefatigables, carbines levelled, rushed onto the platform, surrounded the party leaders and handcuffed them, each selecting a man to himself. Satya's own Indefatigable closed the bracelet on his wrist. The leaders were all dragged to a van that had been drawn up behind the platform, locked in and driven away.

The oppression had begun.

3. THE THIRD ALTERNATIVE

Satya found himself in jail. But precisely where he was, he could not be sure, for the entire journey which had lasted, he believed, nearly a week, had been made in the closed van. The party leaders, shackled to one another, had been let out of the van and allowed to

stretch their legs and relieve themselves only at night, when it was impossible to tell what part of the country they were in. For all but the last day of the trip, they had been chained together wrist to wrist; the chains had not been unfastened even when they were let out to relieve themselves. It proved embarrassing; though all had been transported to prison before, they had never been subjected to such indignity. Thus chained, they had been unable to tend to their needs all at once, and some had had to stand and wait, hiding their disgust, while the rest squatted, or turned aside to avoid wetting or befouling one another. The administration had determined that terror was best approached through humiliation, and humiliation, through the violation of cleanliness. On the last day the van had made many stops, and only then were the chains struck as the party leaders were removed, one by one, each apparently to a separate jail. Thus the original group of some forty had been reduced until Satya was alone, borne to his own destination. His wrist was still manacled; but as there was no one beside him to whom he could be shackled, the free end of the long, empty chain had been fastened to a hook in the wall of the van.

It was obviously prison country; and this, one might as well suppose, was an experimental prison. From the length of the journey and from what he had tasted of the air, feeling it growing rarer and colder on the way, he gathered that they had penetrated to the Northern Foothills. But he was not satisfied merely to know in what province or section he found himself. As he had been cut off completely from contact with the world, he felt it might lessen his isolation to know exactly where he was, for then he would still be defining his life with reference to his country and his people. Therefore, he set about imagining a landscape suitable to experimental prisons; and bearing in mind that they were far North, and yet not actually in mountain country, and that, furthermore, the administration would prefer to keep him in a sparsely populated region, he concluded that the jail was situated somewhere in the forest of Kananda. At once he remembered the river that bordered the forest on the south and that ran through the mountain town of Achalabad, which lay, he judged, some thirty miles to the east. It was from this town that he had set out, several times in his youth, to climb the northern ranges.

His decision concerning his whereabouts was, he knew, no better grounded than the one whereby skeptics, in their dying years, allowed themselves to believe in immortality. It is the present in which they have grown weak, and not the future that concerns them; and their belief in the afterlife is but a means of insuring and strengthening the

reality of the life they know. So Satya, who, as a political man, had become incomplete in himself, now found it necessary to believe in the reality beyond his present experience, and by imagining the landscape, the river, the town and the people in it, he was keeping alive the image of himself that existed out there, and without belief in which he, locked in prison, would lose identity. But as he could not see out of his cell—like the mud hole in the Central Province, in which he had lived voluntarily, the cell had only a narrow slit, high above his head, for light and ventilation—he recognized the necessity he would be under of admitting that the outer reality was now transcended by the inner. He settled back into his obscurity, accustomed to prison life but encountering, as he had each time in the past, a new desolation and a fresh anxiety that he would not be able to sustain himself.

Quite apart from its indignity, it had been a heartbreaking trip. The party leaders for the first few hours were militant and resolute. They had been arrested and dragged off the platform so quickly that they were spared the sight of the massacre, and while they had heard the first shots and seen the first of their followers fall, they were removed before the assault had reached its full proportions. Therefore, they were unbroken in spirit, and their admiration of Satya—to whom, on this occasion, some of the worship reserved for Bapu had fallen—reached heights remarkable even in a party inclined to charismatic excess. At one point their ecstasy had been such that though they were all bouncing about, chained and bound in the dark and crowded van, they insisted on embracing him, and they fell over one another in the effort to throw their arms, and their chains, around his neck. His speech, they declared, was the greatest that man had ever uttered, exceeding even Bapu's speeches in fire and eloquence. Now they could understand why Bapu, no matter how passionately he spoke, had always failed to satisfy them. Now that one thought of it he was inclined to ramble and repeat himself, especially in the later years, and his effectiveness had fallen away with his teeth. Satya need have no fear, they assured him; he had raised the people to greatness, and they would not fail. Even in the precious moment of agony, which they had been allowed to share with their comrades, one had seen how they had risen fearlessly and overwhelmed the soldiers with their faith. They would carry on the struggle, even as he had directed them; the very attack to which the administration had resorted was proof of its weakness, and the people, whom no

power on earth could stop, would see that it fell, completely crushed, never to rise again. "Long live Satya!" they had cried over his protests. Thus they fell to singing hymns and their voices, bearing the divine and forgotten words, blended with the purr of the motor.

But the hymns ended and the darkness persisted. It grew close and hot and finally one of the prisoners fainted. The driver refused to stop and the military guard did not allow them to have water until it was time for their meal, at sundown. They had great difficulty reviving the invalid. Then, after they persuaded him to sit near the door, where it was cooler, the whole company circled about inside the van to bring him to the door and a number were injured, knocking their heads against the walls.

This had broken the silence. Thereafter complaints of suffering were heard—physical, mental and finally political. It had not been such a good speech, after all. Satya had neglected the special problems of the trade unions and the working class: a fine socialist he was. The speech had served only to provoke the authorities, who—as everyone knew—had been reluctant to act. No, argued one of the moderates, more than the speech was at fault. Satya was wrong to have convened the general party meeting in a time of crisis. Bapu would have acted differently, argued another. He would have done thus and such. Or else, so and so. They argued over what Bapu would have done, forgetting Satya entirely, until one of the prisoners remarked, "Anyway, such a speech should not have been delivered until the closing session. Now think of all the business that did not get transacted." Recalled, thereby, to Satya, they attacked him with increased bitterness. They spoke openly now of the collapse of the resistance movement and held him responsible for the misfortune. All was lost; not the administration, but the people would be crushed. Satya had been a greedy politician and a vain and ruthless leader, lusting for power and warning against it only to beguile his followers. They went so far as to accuse him of having conspired with the administration to crush the resistance movement. He had arranged for his speech to serve as the signal for beginning the oppression. And now, having used him, the authorities would throw him in jail with the rest. Unless, of course, they set him free at the end of the trip and rewarded him with a commission in the civil service. But by then they had lost all reason and were weak with hunger, having refused, on religious grounds, to eat the rotten fish which the guards threw to them at nightfall.

Of one thing Satya was sure, as he sat cross-legged on the floor of

his cell—the charges his comrades had made against him, were, in the sense that only politics allows, strictly true. History is everything, and there are no causes. In the judgment of history, he did not exist. He had devoted his life to the movement, striving to contribute his will to the general effort, in the hope that out of the common will might emerge a force which could act as a cause. But he had been only an agent, a means, and never a cause, and through his agency had passed events that he had never intended and in which he could never recognize himself. As an individual he did not, therefore, exist. And thus it was true to say that while he had never conspired and never betrayed, never done anything for which he need feel shame or regret—it was true to say that he was the cause of the defeat of the movement. Insofar as any man could be a cause, he was also the cause of this.

And yet he knew that there were many throughout the country who still revered his name, who thought him a martyr and a hero and prayed for him and suffered with him. For them he still existed as a man, and they would not let history dissolve him. If Satya strove to think well of himself, if he reviewed his past only to make sure there was nothing he need regret, it was not vanity. Or, if it was vanity, it was also the only means of struggling against history and rejecting its conclusions. Narcissus leaned to the river to admire his image, and falling in, drowned. Satya also leaned to admire, but, were he to drown, he would survive.

But what had become of them—those who wished him well, and who, undoubtedly, were in the majority? Satya knew that whatever he should have to endure in prison, he would suffer most from isolation. . . .

Weeks ran by. The prison routine was as he had always known it, and there was no evidence of experimentation. He was in solitary confinement, and solitary confinement was the same as it had always been. With, however, the following exceptions: his cell was not part of a block, but stood alone, a small stone hut isolated from all others. It was surrounded by a twenty foot wall built at a distance of five feet from the hut. He was let out once a day and allowed to walk in the passage between his cell and the prison wall. For all he knew, he was the only prisoner. He could not look over the wall; nor did he hear sounds of life. When he asked for books they were given to him—one was long in coming and when it arrived, he found a note pinned to the cover, apologizing for the delay and explaining that it had been necessary to send to the library at Allaban, no other copy being avail-

able. When he asked for writing materials, these, too, were given to him. And when he asked for company, in irony rather than earnestness, he was given company. A disagreeable fellow was moved into his cell, a merchant who had already served three of the ninety-five years to which he had been sentenced for steaming off tax stamps from packages of spice, removing the cancelation marks and using the stamps over again. Satya at first was grateful for his company, listening patiently, several times a day, to the story of the merchant's arrest. "The Lord have mercy on us, you take your life into your hands when you use a tea kettle for steaming a stamp. It's too much and it ruins the glue. That's how they got me. I had to keep buying glue. 'What does Afghan want with all those glue pots?' they asked themselves, and they came around and began to mix into my affairs. Sacred wheel of life, if they'd only minded their own business, I'd been a free man to this day. Tax stamps! If you ever bought a box of spices, little brother, and saw what you had to pay for it, you'd know something about the tax." But Afghan lied, stole, snored, interrupted Satya's reading, sneered at him, pushed him away from the slit of light and sometimes, getting up at night, would upset the chamber pot and urinate on the floor. And when he found out who Satya was, he called him a trouble-maker and fell on him and beat him. Satya did not resist. But he asked to have Afghan removed, which was done, and he never saw him again. Only when he asked for news did the prison authorities deny him. He kept himself alive in the hope, not so much of his release, which he was willing to admit he might never obtain, but of learning, someday, what had become of the resistance movement, and of again establishing contact with it.

After several months had passed, he began to keep a diary. His entries were undated (he had lost all track of time), and, at first, sporadic.

"At a time like this, a diary! Not enough, the whole world has its eyes on me—I, too, have to steal a glance?"

"I assume it is true, that the world does have its eyes on me. And how I hope it is true! With all my heart, I am not ashamed to confess it. And that those who keep their eyes on me will not have their eyes put out."

"I have led two lives—in jail and out. The two are unrelated to each other. No single life can be both free and bound, and that is why each prisoner—and especially a political prisoner—is in reality two persons. Or three, or five, or any number, so long as it is not one. Freedom is now a memory, and at times even a meaningless one. It amazes me that

I should ever in the past have had command of it. This, this stone world is now real, the chamber pot, the five minute walk in the yard in the morning. The dish of food shoved in through the door and removed half an hour later.

"Jail at A—, jail at B—, jail at C—, jail at D—. I have lost count. I have been through an entire alphabet of jails. One third of life is normally lost in sleep. And one half of the remainder in jail. Leaving one-third of life free, which I persist in regarding as the real life. But on that count I have lived only about 18 years.

"But I must be forgetting my true history, which is that of imprisonment. For with two-thirds of life wasted, I should never have been able to become the Satya, who lives on out there. This prison, although the same in all other respects, differs from its predecessors in that I really am cut off; is this the element of experimentation? At other jails I kept in touch with the movement, issued directives, wrote long letters on policy, received visitors, did some of my best work. There is now at least one consolation: that I cannot look out. How many nights have I spent in jail looking out at the moon and the stars! I know what terrible things the stars are. If I had a window to sit at, and spent my nights looking at the liberty of the sky, I am sure I would go mad."

"At last, evidence of experiment. This morning, stubbed my toe on one of the paving blocks in the courtyard, and was surprised to see that I had knocked it out of place. I bent down to replace the block and discovered that a number of them were loose. The hole opened into a tunnel, large enough for a man to pass through. Was enough a fool to grow excited and imagine I had found a means of escape. I dropped into the tunnel and crept along underground until I came to a wider opening. It was pitch black (I had holed myself in, like a fool) but I knew where I was—smack in the prison's sewage system. The stench was unbearable, and I had wet my feet and my trousers. I groped my way back, having a terror of a time finding the loose stones. I'm sure that every cell has access to the sewers—to let the prisoners think they have found a way of "escaping." I'm sure there is a maze of tunnels running underground, built only with the intention of luring us into the filth and getting us smeared up well. Filth, filth, filth—it is all they can think of. For all their primness, their white and tidy formalities, their minds are obsessed with it!"

"Further evidence. A few nights ago there was howling of wolves. It woke me in the middle of the night. Have heard wolves many times before, but was unnerved by it. The howling persisted for, I should judge, at least two hours, receded and came closer, and at times one would think the wolves were right outside his door. When the howling stopped, the silence was oppressive. I became aware of how deathly still it is here. There is never a sound of life. Were it not for Afghan, I should think myself the only prisoner. I lay awake waiting for the howling to resume and finally, hoping it would. By that time I had roused myself and was unable to return to sleep."

"Last night there was roaring—as of lions and tigers. And I distinctly heard elephants trumpeting. Perhaps also a chattering of monkeys, but was not sure. I don't believe that the whole jungle goes roaming over our grounds at night, so I was not terrified when I heard human screams. But had a vivid picture of the beasts tearing men apart. And yet, perhaps. . . . I would not put it past them. Could not fall asleep again."

"They skipped a night, then last night went at it again. I awoke, but did not trouble to identify the sounds. Something even more terrible, I suppose. I was comforted and fell asleep promptly. It made me feel the presence of other prisoners—surely they wouldn't put on the whole show only for me. I have learned to cope with them—at least here—and am proud of it. Will sleep soundly from now on.

"And yet to think of the planning that went into it! Power improves the state's imagination—makes it more of a fool, but more of a horror than ever. The trouble they went to, wiring the prison, installing loudspeakers, recording wolves, lions, tigers, human screams! The poor prisoners who know nothing of radio, lie in terror, waiting to be thrown to the beasts. Or are already out of their minds.

"The state! If I regret anything it is that I was never more of an anarchist."

"Last night, awoke in fear. It was not the 'jungle.' I had been sleeping peacefully and it is that, I think, which awoke me. It was quiet in the prison. I walked the floor, unable to think. But I knew what it was, I understood, and if I had not been a coward I would have admitted it. 'What about it? What about it? What about it?' The question kept running through my head, vulgar and threatening, as if spoken by a cab driver demanding his fare. I felt a tremendous guilt. I should have been able to throw myself under the wheels of a wagon to be crushed, the way some of our people do at religious ceremonies.

"But why do I keep deluding myself, and putting it off, maintaining my spirits, my hope, my blindness? Why do I refuse to recognize the truth? They have power, and they do not hesitate to use it. They have begun the oppression and they will see it through.

"It remains to be seen—no, it does not. Why should they not succeed? What force can stop them? Admit how it is. The prisons are full; each day the troops go through the bazaars and the native quarters, the business districts and the country side, rounding up the comrades, jailing them without trial, hanging them or shooting them without cause. Cause enough! Or else they line up the innocent and the ignorant and the backward in the city streets and charge them with bayonets—and make our people look on. And then force us to light the funeral pyres, that we may come to accept our guilt in the murder of the innocent.

"How blind we have all been! Bapu! I would hate him if I did not hate myself!"

He could not say when he actually resolved to fast. In the past

he had frequently gone without food for several days at a time or restricted himself to a single meal a day, when he felt his health succumbing to prison-damp. Having now developed a cough—the inflammation of an old prison affliction—he had cut off food for a day, then limited himself strictly until he felt his health improving. Not that he put much faith in fasts, or went nearly so far as Bapu had gone in regulating his diet. It was quackery at its best, and he had never hesitated to jeer at Bapu during the latter's nut period, for example, or when the old man had cut out beans, taking a vow as fervent as the one whereby he had bound himself to chastity. But, since prison food was abominable, no one stood to suffer from abstaining, and in a few days Satya felt quite well again. Nevertheless, he did not resume his full diet.

He did not know what was driving him to it—or if he knew, he would not admit it to himself. However, he had soon cut out food entirely, and was no longer fasting, but had gone on a hunger strike.

He expected to gain nothing by it. And for that matter, he was not starving in protest. The protest he should have had to make was so great, no sacrifice would have expressed it properly. Besides, he had lost all interest in the life of the prison, and if there were any concessions to be won, they no longer concerned him.

The first two days his hunger was intense. But even then he did not inquire what drove him to it, or what purpose he could expect it to fulfill. If there were anything he need know, he would learn from hunger itself. For the rest, he tried to determine how he should bear himself in relation to it, and whether he should try to conceal his starvation from the authorities.

He turned back all his food, leaving the dishes untouched at the door and drinking only a little water. On the third day the authorities, thinking apparently that the food was offending him, offered him delicacies. Several excellent dishes were shoved in through the door: baked eggplant, a rhubarb soup, a bowl of nut meats, a plate of fruit. Satya hesitated. By rejecting these dishes he would indicate that he had gone on a hunger strike. He wondered whether it was advisable to let the jailers know, and he feared that whatever reasons he might have for doing so, vanity would be among them. Therefore he let it appear that he had yielded to temptation. He scraped the plates clean, hiding the food in a corner of the cell and returned the empty dishes. The next morning when he was let out for exercise, he went to the sewer under the paving stones and threw the food away.

He no longer felt hungry, but experiencing some difficulty in lifting the stones, he realized he was growing weak.

Tempting dishes continued to appear. Satya went through the same procedure for several days, drinking only a little water. Then, growing bolder as he grew weaker (he could hardly raise the stones) he decided to trust himself and let the authorities know. He stopped going to the courtyard in the morning and let the food remain at the door, to be removed by the guard.

His faculties were still clear; clearer, he thought. He had reasoned it out, trying to find what purpose, deep within himself (since none was obvious) he was serving by starvation. At least, he knew, it had nothing to do with vanity. Bapu's hunger strikes had drawn the attention and the prayers of the whole nation—had been directed against specific wrongs and had always succeeded in wringing a few concessions. Without a doubt there had been vanity in Bapu's hungering. But what of it? He no longer felt a sense of superiority in recognizing the more intimate motives of Bapu's saintliness. It had been politics—all politics—and therefore, certainly, there was vanity in it. But vanity is not inconsistent with saintliness. And not only vanity and not only saintliness: the whole person, with all his imperfections and the whole ideal life, with all its austerities—the two were in harmony, even though one hand did not know what the other was doing. So intertwined were the ideal and the real, that they were necessarily in harmony; and even if one evolved for himself the loftiest metaphysics in order to justify a little physical stealing on the body's side, it did no harm and left no blemish. For the body sometimes stepped naked out of its shrewdness, throttled itself, died willingly, gladly, for the sake of the ideal—even if the ideal, as was so often the case, were foggy and vague, or inexpressible, if clear. All things human were ironical; but irony merely observed the truth without destroying it, and a perfect irony was the greatest kindness that existed on earth.

Well then, if it was not vanity that made him go on a useless hunger strike, what was it? He was beginning to believe in his will alone, and determined to let its working provide the answer. Meanwhile he sat cross-legged on the floor of his cell, motionless for hours at a time. Sometimes he would sleep the whole day away; at other times made entries in his diary or slump against the wall, exhausted, his features gaunt, the lines about his mouth, which had wavered ambiguously between pity and pain, now drawn entirely in pity. At times a strange exaltation would come over him, as though, were he

not weak, he might perform some act of defiance, deliver a speech, or call out for the entire world to hear. He would unconsciously assume his old posture, his left shoulder slightly raised, his head in profile, his right arm drawn back.

"Awakened again last night. No jungle. News broadcast, piped into my cell. Listened, about the resistance. Statistics, honest apparently—they are not afraid or ashamed. Something like 400,000 political prisoners; 900,000 executed; 100,000 listed as missing. The resistance smashed. Disobedience movement completely abandoned."

"Gave me a newspaper yesterday. Printed, apparently, here in the prison. Same news as in the broadcast. Seems they are not lying. Tore it up.

"They have techniques for breaking down the person. For making him adopt their values, making him imitate. They have learned everything, not a thing they don't know. But remain fools. Yet what of it? The observation has lost point."

"Could it have been otherwise? I do not think so. I do not regret it. We are right, absolutely. Sometimes think we will still win."

"Polarity, the whole of life. Woe to them who live fully."

"A proud day. Thought of B. M. the moderate, and prided myself. B. M. with his running ear, and little hand pump to drain off the serum . . ."

"Am haunted by the old man. Bapu, am I aping you?"

"He gives me no rest. I find sometimes that I curse him. Violently. Sometimes am in a sweat and find I have been thinking of him. My thoughts clearest when I think of him. Do not mind the hunger. Is it tenth day? Lost track."

"Pulse seems a little weaker, occasional dizziness; passes after rest. Water is nauseating, but great help. Must remain clear-headed, important to understand. No desire to turn to religion."

"A very clear day. Thought it through. Regret nothing. It's not a religious impulse. I still have no faith, never will have. No faith, but fidelity. That, yes! Never recognized the distinction.

"Not the *existence* but the *insistence* of God."

"This is all effort of will. But do not mistrust will. It is necessary because man weak. But will strong. Truth is, man by nature selfish and evil, man has no love! Ideal never true. But we who know reality need have no fear. We *will* to make it true. Bapu, I understand you.

"The whole age in politics today is this: will against fact. Power, the fact. State powerful. We are the will! At the last extreme. After us, the darkness. Our negativism, disobedience, perpetual no! It is necessary! Today, it is the only thing that says yes!

"I am not too weak to make exclamation marks!"

"We triumph in spite of our weakness, not because of our strength. Remember reading report about European ghetto. Doomed. Uprising. Noble thing. But people degraded. Even during uprising people degraded. Starving. Turned informers for food. Lied, stole, cheated. Imitated the oppressor. Worst of all, some tried curry favor. But, in spite degradation, battle was fought. Magnificent. All the greater its glory, its humanity. Even the degraded heart uplifted. Victory is not only over enemy. Is over ourselves!"

"Yesterday, authorities came. Tried talk me out of hunger strike. Not interested in them. Fools and hypocrites. Told them so. Told them kind to me. Could have been worse. But have some imagination. Left me alone. Knew I would destroy myself. Have not disappointed them.

"Told me more. Seems true. They have won, time being. People defeated. Docile, outwardly. Cowed, support regime. Refused end hunger strike. Told them, even if useless, necessary. Did not understand me. Say it again. To myself. Necessary, necessary, necessary! I understand."

"Not that I can't recognize facts. I know what the truth is. But the other half of fact, unseen! Truth's other name, courage to speak."

"Am still alive. Some physical strength. Absurd vomiting. Danger is, may still weaken morally."

"The new science of man. Authorities like ascetic scholars of the middle period: they too made a study of pain. How well they understand! Have discovered the affinity of the oppressed for the oppressor. Now comes the new age of the State, the acceptance of suffering. All struggle has rested on belief that men either good or evil. Only necessary to destroy the belief and provide third alternative: the new man, neutral, will love his degradation.

"Bapu, these months prison, hated you. At long last, have come to ask your blessing."

The day the above entry was written, guards came and let Satya out of his cell. With their support he walked fairly well, though pausing frequently to rest. The guards opened the door of the outer wall and led him forth into a courtyard. It was a vast yard, one huge wall stretching miles around and embracing many small closures, similar to his own. He was made to sit on a stone bench, while some of the other enclosures were opened. A few prisoners were let out. At first

Satya did not recognize them, then saw they were party leaders with whom he had been brought up in the van. He rose and went toward them.

They, too, had been detained in solitary, and therefore did not at first recognize one another. But when they saw Satya they knew who he was and who they were, and their faces lightened, and they clasped hands and came toward him eagerly, but slowly, unsteady on their feet. A few had difficulty in standing erect, and these, Satya knew, had been kept chained. All had grown pale with prison damp; a few were now white, and a few bald. As they approached Satya they began to weep; but controlling themselves, maintaining discipline, they raised the weak cry: "Long live Satya!" and came forward and embraced him, weeping.

Except for those who had been chained—their wrists and their ankles, fastened together, had worn raw—they had not been molested by the authorities. But a number of them were also starving. When they looked at Satya they understood, and lowered their eyes and knelt before him. He bade them rise.

"Comrades," he said to them, "I am thankful that we are together."

They spoke with one another, sitting on the stones of the court. None had had news of the outside, except what the administration had passed on to them, and none knew what had happened to the other comrades who had come up with them on the prison journey from Allaban. They begged Satya to forgive them for their conduct in the van. A few still had hope, and they spoke words of encouragement to one another, whether or not they believed what they were saying. The movement would not fail, the people would now, at their very worst hour, succeed in wresting their liberty from the oppressor, and they would soon see Satya established as the leader of a free land. But even as the comrades extended their encouragement they refrained from mentioning Satya's fast, and held their eyes averted.

What was it he felt for them? Shame? Shame was what he felt before them; shame and guilt, remembering their accusations and knowing that his failure had made them true. The reunion would have been easier to bear, had the comrades still been hostile toward him. He tried to provoke their hostility, blaming himself for what had happened; but they would not hear of it, and they silenced him with the elaborate and flattering courtesy that was the custom of the land. "You mustn't, you mustn't, it's sinful!" cried one of the elderly comrades, always a religious man; he quoted a few passages from Scrip-

ture, whose relevance Satya failed to see. "You mustn't provoke yourself. If anything, you should feel proud," said another, laying his hand on Satya's arm. "You are a great man! We are with you. We would willingly be arrested a thousand times. We would go through the same ordeal forever!" "You are an illustrious man!" said still another. "A single one of your mistakes is worth more to us than all the success under the sun. We would rather, a hundred thousand times, follow you down the path of error, than follow any other man, even though he had found the right way." "Be calm, be trusting, have patience, have faith, have hope!" they all cried. "We implore you, do not grieve, do not despair, do not tire yourself!"

It was clear to him— as it would have been from the comrades' words, had not etiquette already determined it—that he must in no way refer to his weakness or to his fast. Custom demanded that one never add to the burden of another's sympathy; thus, while they spoke courteously and soothingly, he was obliged to assume a rough and almost vulgar tone with them, to prove himself unworthy of their solicitude. Then, returning their sympathy, he removed his cap and offered it to one of the bald comrades as a protection against the sun. The latter was now bound to humble himself, which he did by flinging the cap back at Satya. And yet what were they that they had to observe the formalities with one another? If he was their leader and they were his followers, the truth should have been sufficient for them all. The truth of past failure and of approaching death; the truth underlying the words of flattery—"we would . . . be arrested a thousand times. We would go through the same ordeal . . .;" "a single one of your mistakes is worth more than . . . success . . .;" "we would rather follow you [in] error than . . . any other man *even though* he had found the right way." Above all, there was the truth of inner failure: what love, what charity, what suffering or humility could he summon within himself to take on, before them, the leader's burden? The flattery, the courtesy, the words of encouragement and clichés of hope persisted. No act of life could bear reality.

After they had been speaking for a time, someone proposed that they sing the party's song. Weakly, incapable of sustaining the long notes, they sang the anthem that availed itself of the peculiar syntax of the native language whereby future events could be named in the present tense. But the song prevailed over them and over their poor, hoarse voices; it forgave their weakness, and banished their fear. For music is time and, linked to the native language, it brought the future before them. In the future, as a moral necessity, there lay ripening

the inviolable reward and the fruit of all labor. So that, even when the guards came and dismissed the comrades, pushing them back into their enclosures, the anthem, which had been interrupted, went on, slowly and nobly concluding itself in the imagination. The leave-taking was the reunion.

Satya was left sitting on the stones. Several other gates were opened. With difficulty Satya recognized the prisoners: they, too, had come up in the van. They were in good health, not gaunt and slow on their feet like the others; some even had a high color, as if they had been eating meat. But all were wild and unkempt, almost savage in appearance; their faces were bloated and coarsened, as if they had received blows, although no scars or discolorations could be seen. Or, rather, the faces of the comrades seemed, somehow, to have been transformed from within.

When the prisoners recognized Satya they rushed at him and began to kick him and beat him. One of the prison guards intervened and placed a whip in Satya's hands, indicating that he was to defend himself. Satya rejected the whip, rose to his feet and spoke to the comrades, trying to recall them to their senses. Refusing to listen, they knocked him down again.

The guards drove back the prisoners and formed a ring around them, each grasping the end of the other's whip. The comrades, some seven men in all, were crushed together. This was done, evidently, to inflame their brutality. Meanwhile a barber, carrying a wad of cotton and a sponge, came up to Satya to see if he had sustained any cuts; the barber examined him, wiped a trickle of blood from his mouth, passed the sponge over his forehead and retreated. For the first time Satya noticed a number of the jail officials sitting under striped umbrellas. They were looking on in great interest, as if following an experiment. Several were taking notes.

The guards allowed the prisoners to break out, and they rushed at Satya again and once more began to beat him. His pain and his pity were identical: "pity them and save them!" The unexpressed thought remained in his consciousness as he lay under their blows. But now suffering alone constituted his hold on life.

A Note on Art and Neurosis

LIONEL TRILLING

THIS NOTE is written to take issue with a single point of Dr. Rosenzweig's essay on Henry James in the last PARTISAN REVIEW. The point in question is what Dr. Rosenzweig calls "the sacrificial roots of [literary] power" and "the unhappy sources of [James's] genius." To suggest a wider application of his study of James, Dr. Rosenzweig refers to Edmund Wilson's *The Wound and the Bow* in which Wilson takes as the type of genius the hero Philoctetes with his unerring bow and incurable wound, suggesting that the power of genius is inextricably linked with disability; and Dr. Rosenzweig says of his own investigation of James that it "reveals the aptness of the Philoctetes pattern." This conception of genius—more particularly artistic genius—is one of the most characteristic assumptions of our culture and I should like to question it.

But first I should like to say that the point is not integral to Dr. Rosenzweig's essay and does not invalidate it. The essay is admirable and its virtues of manner and matter do credit not only to its author but also to the present state of psychoanalytical culture. The accuracy, delicacy and respect for the object which Dr. Rosenzweig shows did not always mark the psychoanalytical method in its dealings with literature. From the very start, it was recognized that psychoanalysis was likely to have important things to say about art. Freud himself thought so, yet when he first addressed himself directly to art and the artist he said many clumsy and misleading things.

I have elsewhere and at length tried to separate the useful from the useless (and even dangerous) statements about art that Freud has made (*Kenyon Review*, Spring, 1940). To put it briefly here, Freud has had some illuminating and even beautiful insights into particular works of art, especially those that are complex and have an element of myth. Without explicitly undertaking to do so, his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* offers a brilliant and comprehensive explanation of our interest in tragedy. And what is of course most important of all, the whole tendency of the Freudian psychology establishes the naturalness and validity of artistic thinking. It is there-

fore the more surprising that Freud, especially in his early writings, should have made the gross mistake of treating the artist as if he were a kind of neurotic escaping from reality by means of "substitute gratifications." As Freud went forward he seems to have insisted less on this formulation—certainly it did not have its original force with him when, at his seventieth birthday celebration, he refused credit for the *discovery* of the unconscious, saying that this properly belonged to the literary masters.

Freud's early belief in the neuroticism of the artist found an all too fertile ground—found, we might say, the very ground from which it sprang: for in speaking of the artist as a neurotic, Freud was but adopting one of the popular assumptions of his age.

Most readers of this note will see in that the expression of the bourgeois philistinism of the nineteenth century. In this they are partly right. The nineteenth century established the huge basic virtue of "getting up at eight, shaving close at a quarter-past, breakfasting at nine, going to the City at ten, coming home at half-past five and dining at seven." To the Messrs. Podsnap of the time it was corollary to the certainty of this virtue that the arts must celebrate it. "Nothing else to be permitted to those same vagrants the Arts, on pain of excommunication. Nothing else To Be—anywhere!" We observe that the day begins with rising and ends with dinner: bed and sleep are not part of the Reality that Is.

The excommunication of the vagrant took the form of pronouncing him mentally degenerate, a device which eventually found its apologist in Max Nordau. In the history of the arts this is new. The poet was always known to belong to a touchy tribe—*genus irritabile* was a tag anyone would know. But this is not quite to say, as, in effect, the nineteenth century began to say, neurotic. The eighteenth century did not find the poet to be less whole than other men and certainly the Renaissance did not. If he was a professional, there might be condescension to his social status, but in a time which deplored all professionalism this was simply a way of asserting the high value of poetry, which ought not be compromised by trade. Not that there was no mockery of poets, but a certain good nature marked even the snubbing of the professional. No one was likely to identify the poet with the weakling. Indeed, the Renaissance ideal held poetry to be one of the signs of manly completeness.

The change from this view of things cannot be blamed wholly on the philistine public. Some of the "blame" must rest with the poets themselves. The Romantic poets were as proud of their art as the vaunting poets of the sixteenth century, but one told the world that

he wanted to lie down like a tired child and weep away this life of care, another asked "Why did I laugh to-night?," another explained, in a great poem, the subtle psychological reasons for his being no longer able to write great poetry. The public took them all at their word.

Wherever the "blame" lies, the myth of the neurotic artist grew. Both sides cherished it. The artist can find advantage in the notion—it gives him the ancient privileges of the idiot and the fool, half-prophetic creatures. That the artist's neurosis can be but a mask is suggested by Thomas Mann's pleasure in representing his untried youth as "sick" but his successful maturity as militarily robust and efficient.

And the myth has its advantage for the philistine too, a double advantage. On the one hand, the belief in the artist's neuroticism allows the philistine to shut his ears to what the artist says. But on the other hand, it allows him to listen. For we must not make the common mistake—the philistine does want to listen at the same time that he wants to shut his ears. By supposing that the artist has an interesting but not always reliable relation to reality, he is able to control and modify what he is told. If he did not want to listen at all he would say "insane"; with "neurotic," which hedges, he can listen when he chooses.

The early attempts of psychoanalysis to deal with art went on this philistine assumption. The artist was neurotic, the content of his work was neurotic; since neurosis was what the analysts were trying to get rid of, the implication was that what the artist said was not in a correct relation to reality. The virtue of Dr. Rosenzweig's essay is that, dealing with the neurotic element in Henry James's work, he at no point suggests that this element in any way lessens James's value as artist or moralist. In effect he says that neurosis is a way of dealing with reality which in real life is most uncomfortable, uneconomical and usually ineffective, but that this judgment of neurosis in life cannot be mechanically transferred to neurotically generated subjects in art. He of course nowhere suggests that a neurotically generated subject is, because of its genesis, irrelevant; indeed, the manner of his treatment suggests what is surely the case, that every neurosis deals with a real emotional situation of the most fundamental and most widely relevant kind.

Yet as Dr. Rosenzweig brings his exposition to a close, he falls into an error by no means so gross as the one I have described but still a source of confusion. It might be called the inversion of the error which finds the artist's weakness in his neurotic temperament—Dr.

Rosenzweig finds the artist's *strength* in his neurosis. "The broader application of the inherent pattern," he says, "is familiar to readers of Edmund Wilson's recent volume, *The Wound and the Bow* Reviewing the experience and works of several well-known literary masters, Wilson discloses the sacrificial roots of their power on the model of the Greek legend. In the case of Henry James, the present account not only provides a similar insight into the unhappy sources of his genius, but . . .," etc.

This comes as a surprise. Nothing in Dr. Rosenzweig's theory requires it. The theory asserts no more than that the young Henry James, predisposed by temperament and family situation to certain mental qualities, was injured—perhaps unconsciously inviting the injury—in a way he believed to be sexual, thus identifying himself with his injured ("castrated"—a leg had been amputated) father, and that this resulted in a certain pattern of life and in a preoccupation with certain themes which more or less obscurely symbolize his sexual situation. For this I think Dr. Rosenzweig makes a sound case which could, indeed, be further substantiated from the novels, for Dr. Rosenzweig derives his evidence only from the short stories. Yet this, I submit, is not the same thing as disclosing the roots of James's power or providing an insight into the sources of his genius. It tells us nothing about James's energy and devotion; nothing about his architectonic skill; nothing about his gifts of wit and phrase; nothing about his power of judgment; nothing about the other themes that were important to him and that cannot be connected with his "castration."

A neurosis or a neurotic fantasy always relates to a reality, and a neurotic expression of a reality is likely to have more force than a "normal" one. And neurotic people, because they are more apprehensive than "normal" people, are actually likely to see a great deal more of reality and to see it with more intensity. We may therefore accept it as true that the neurotic element in the artist may give rise to his particular subject-matter. Yet granting these things to be true, and true of James, I believe it is still wrong to find the root and source of power and genius in neurosis.

The particular essay which gives Edmund Wilson's book its title and cohering principle does not explicitly say that the roots of power are sacrificial and that the source of genius is unhappy. Where it is explicit it states only that "genius and disease, like strength and mutilation, may be inextricably bound up together," which of course says no more than that personality is integral and not made up of detachable parts. And certainly the Philoctetes legend, which Mr.

Wilson effectively uses, does not suggest anything beyond this. It does not suggest that the wound is the price of the bow, or that without the wound the bow cannot be possessed or drawn. Yet Dr. Rosenzweig has accurately summarized the force and I think the intention of Mr. Wilson's whole book; its several studies do seem to say that artistic effectiveness depends on emotional pain.

This notion that genius has an unhappy source or that power is the reward of sacrifice is as deeply rooted in popular assumption as is its converse, that the artist's genius and power are not real because they are the products of his neurosis. For those who wish to find art irrelevant there is assurance in the foolish self-torture of the artist. For those who wish to find art important, the same pain, differently described, is a guaranty of the value of the artist's work. Part of the popular mind always responds to the idea that pain and sacrifice are virtuous.

To the belief that power springs from pain and neurotic sacrifice there are two major objections.

1) The first objection to this explanation of genius is that it applies almost exclusively to artists and chiefly to writers. I have suggested one reason why writers are especially available to this explanation—it is that they tell us, often in the most powerful language, what is going on inside them. And even when they do not make a diagnosis of themselves or describe "symptoms," we must remember that it is their profession to deal with fantasy in some form or other. They constitute the only group in our society that takes responsibility for its fantasies. (And here I would say that the more a writer takes pains with his work and the further he removes it from the personal and the subjective, the more—and not the less—he is expressing his unconscious.)

In short, it is the writer's job to exhibit his unconscious. He may disguise it for various reasons and in various ways. But disguise is not concealment.

What is more, the writer is likely to be a great hand at personal letters, diaries and autobiographies: indeed, practically the only good autobiographies are those of writers. The writer's instrument is his state of mind and usually he is aware of its condition and articulate about it. It is therefore wonderfully easy to find the material upon which to make psychological explanations of him. Only a man as devoted to the truth of the emotions as Henry James was would have informed the world, despite his characteristic reticence, of an accident so intimate as his.

But no one who has ever lived observantly among scientists will

claim that they are free from neurosis. How often, indeed, is it apparent that the devotion to science can be called a neurotic manifestation, or at least can be understood as going very cosily with a neurotic temperament. Of scientists as a group we might say that they are less deeply concerned with the manifestations of personality—their own or others'—than are writers as a group. But this relative indifference is scarcely a sign of normality—perhaps of the contrary.

It is the basic assumption of psychoanalysis that the acts of *every* person are influenced by the forces of the unconscious. The competent psychoanalyst is supposed to find every expression of his patient meaningful—bearing, tone and pitch of voice, manner of dress, eagerness or reluctance in the payment of fees, and so on. A scientist, a banker, a lawyer, a surgeon, if precisely observed in his habits over a sufficiently long time would be giving evidence of the state of his unconscious not less suggestive than the evidence a writer commonly provides by his works and his letters. It would take longer to accumulate the necessary facts, for the professional standing of such men requires concealment and conformity. However, if they were actually being psychoanalyzed, we can suppose that the time the analyst would require to draw the conclusions would be no greater than he would need to draw conclusions about the writer similarly in analysis.

The result of sufficient observation would, I think, show that the neurotic elements of the scientist, banker, lawyer or surgeon are of the same frequency and the same kind as the writer's. Possibly the writer's fantasies would show as richer and more various, but their essential content would be the same as those of the others. I of course do not mean that everybody has the same troubles and fantasies, but only that there is no special classification for writers.

If that is so and if we still want to relate the writer's power to his neurosis, we must be willing to relate all intellectual achievement to neurosis. We must find the roots of Darwin's power in his sorely neurotic temperament, the roots of Pascal's mathematical genius in the impulses which drove him to extreme religious masochism—I choose but the classic example. Perhaps the political leader is the only person who is interpreted in so free a way as the writer: we all know that this demagogue became powerful because he was weak and snubbed. But if we make the neurosis-power equivalence at all, we must make it in every field of endeavor; logician, economist, botanist, physicist, engineer—no profession may be so respectable or so remote as to be exempt from the psychological interpretation. And since neurosis can account not only for intellectual success but also for failure

and even for mediocrity, we have most of society involved in neurosis. To this I have no objection; I think most of society is indeed involved in neurosis. But with neurosis accounting for so very much, it can no longer account for one man's literary power.

2) The second objection is concerned with the complete identification of the writer's fantasies with his power of expressing them. Let us grant, for argument's sake, that the creative writer, as distinguished from other men, is the victim of a "mutilation" and that his fantasies are neurotic.* But must we then say, as if it were an inevitable next step, that his ability to express them and to impress us with them is neurotic?—for that ability is what we mean by his powers. Anyone might be injured as Henry James was and even have the other and less gross similarities to his situation, and yet not have his power.

The Philoctetes story has its very great interest, but as a myth it is deficient in that it does not suggest explanation. It makes no causal connection between the wound and the bow. And if we look into the matter, we see that there is no connection in fact between them. Indeed, still granting the poet to be neurotic, what is surely not neurotic—what, indeed, suggests nothing but health—is the power of controlling and using his neuroticism. He shapes his fantasies, he gives them social form and reference.** Again supposing the writer

* I am using the word "fantasy," unless modified, in a neutral sense. A fantasy, in this sense, may be distinguished from the representation of something that actually exists, but it is not opposed to "reality" and not an "escape" from reality. Thus, the idea of a rational society, or the image of a good house to be built, or the story of something that never happened, is a fantasy. There may be neurotic or un-neurotic fantasies.

** Charles Lamb, whose criticism is sadly underestimated, has made the classic statement on this subject. He is denying that genius is "allied" to insanity; for "insanity" and its manifestations the modern reader will of course substitute "neurosis" and what is characteristic of it. "The ground of the mistake is, that men, finding in the raptures of the higher poetry a condition of exaltation, to which they have no parallel in their own experience, besides the spurious resemblance of it in dreams and fevers, impute a state of dreaminess and fever to the poet. But the true poet dreams being awake. He is not possessed by his subject, but has dominion over it . . . Where he seems most to recede from humanity, he will be found the truest to it. From beyond the scope of Nature if he summon possible existences, he subjugates them to the law of her consistency. He is beautifully loyal to that sovereign directress, even when he appears most to betray and desert her . . . Herein the great and the little wits are differenced; that if the latter wander ever so little from nature or actual existence, they lose themselves and their readers . . . They do not create, which implies shaping and consistency. Their imaginations are not active—for to be active is to call something into act and form—but passive, as men in sick dreams."—"Sanity of True Genius."

to be a patient in analysis, I would guess that no psychoanalyst would call this manifestation of the ego a part of the sickness he is treating. On the contrary, it would obviously be for him the very element on which he could fasten his hope of cure. And nothing is so characteristic of the artist as this power of shaping a work.

The activity of the artist, we must remember, can be aped by many who are not artists. The expressions of some schizophrenic people have the intense appearance of creativity and a kind of interest and even significance, but they are not works of art. Again, it is not uncommon in our society for neurotic people to imitate the artist in his life and even in his ideas and ambitions; they follow the artist in everything except performance. It was, I think, Otto Rank who called such people half-artists and confirmed the diagnosis of their neuroticism at the same time that he differentiated them from true artists. (Incidentally, the phenomenon of the half-scientist is yet to be noted: for social reasons it is, as it were, a merely latent phenomenon—the half-scientist is *put to work* by society and helped to be “creative” and therefore we do not recognize him. Generally, we may observe, the impulse to make psychological comments on the intellectual life of scientists is not countenanced and does not often appear.)

Of the whole artist we may say that whatever elements of neurosis he has in common with all his fellow-citizens, the one part of him that is healthy, by any possible definition of health, is that which gives him the power to conceive, to plan, to work, and to bring his work to completion. It would be impossible to deny that whatever disease or mutilation the artist may suffer is an element of his work which conditions every part of it. It most immediately conditions his choice of subject; it has its effect on the quality of his form. But disease and mutilation are available to all of us—life provides them with prodigal generosity. What marks the artist is his power to shape and control the raw material we all have.

The Philoctetes story, it seems to me, is not so much a scientific, explanatory myth as it is a moral myth. It tells us, in its juxtaposition of the wound and the bow, that we must be aware that weakness does not preclude strength nor strength weakness. It is therefore not irrelevant to the artist, but when we use it to explain him we should remember that there are many myths about the arts—that in Apollo the Greeks connected the bow with the lyre, two strengths together, and that the myths of Pan and Dionysius even suggest that for some kinds of art no bow is needed at all.

THE BORROWER OF SALT

The man who saw the light hanging on the tall end
Of the road thought it was a lantern on the distant wall
Of the mysterious neighbor, so he said, friend, friend,
I am coming out to borrow some of the savor of your salt.

And he started running toward the light that hung
In the neighbor's window and as he kept going the light
Danced, saying with a mocking step, isn't it wrong
That I dance in my glory while you walk in the night?

Yes, said the man, it is wrong, and what is worse
The wind is getting bad, the mud thicker, the road
Harder to follow and I move as slowly as a hearse,
In fact I practically crawl so heavy is the load.

The gleam tittered like a light on the end of a spar
But the man was up to his knees in road as if roots
Sprouted from his feet; alas, said the man, this is too hard,
Those who walk in great men's tracks should wear boots.

So he turned around and the wind opened spigots of air
On his head, up his thighs he felt the earth's lips creep,
And lo, the light gleamed spiritedly from his own fair
Housetop, but he couldn't move, the track was so deep.

OSCAR WILLIAMS

Social Ambiguity in a Gothic Novel

WYLIE SYPHER

INCREASINGLY criticism attempts to determine as fully as possible the larger references made by any literary work. Although “romanticism” flourished in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, precisely while the bourgeoisie were commanding economic, social, and political power, its psychological and aesthetic contexts have so far been more attentively observed than its socio-economic contexts. Especially does the recent *Romanticism and the Modern Ego* by Jacques Barzun demonstrate how a great many academic platitudes about “romanticism” can be discussed, to all appearance indefinitely, without much regard to these socio-economic contexts that identify romanticism as a bourgeois (in contrast to feudal) phenomenon. Even if Barzun denies the equation of romanticism with such impulses as sentimentalism, primitivism, or mediaevalism in favor of a conception of romanticism as a creative force, his whole treatment, like that of literary historians preceding him, ignores the criticism of G. V. Plekhanov and those who see in the movement a superficial, inconclusive rebellion against bourgeois civilization. According to Plekhanov, the bourgeois-romantic senses the banality of bourgeois existence and the deficiencies in bourgeois morality without, however, being actually antagonistic to the social relations that give rise to this morality.

It is true of major romantic writers, as it is true of all writers of large significance, that the contexts within which they create are more extended, less explicitly and determinately established, than is the case with writers who evoke limited or stereotyped responses. If one might isolate an instance of British romanticism that is “pure” to the point of being archetypal—an instance necessarily somewhat stereotyped and limited in its evocations—and place it within its socio-economic contexts, the attempt might be worthwhile simply because it would disclose certain ambiguities arising from the inconclusiveness of the romantic revolt against the bourgeoisie.

Difficult as romanticism may be to define, there would probably be agreement that the "gothic" novel of Mrs. Radcliffe with its stress upon Salvatorean "nature," mediaevalism, horror, and emotionalism is a very "pure" instance of the romantic. Mrs. Radcliffe lacks, naturally, the inward eye of Wordsworth, the inflammatory political rationalism of Shelley or Godwin, the solipsism of Byron, the lethean sensuousness of Keats—the impact of the great romantics; but she illustrates almost every feature of romanticism in however slight dimension. She is relevant clinically, and not without present interest through her influence upon Lautréamont and the surrealists.

If one can force himself to penetrate the obvious, there appears beneath the surface of Mrs. Radcliffe's gothic fabrications a pattern of socio-economic contradictions, paradoxes, ambivalences, and ambiguities that affords some criteria of the greater romantics and of British romanticism generally. Other romantics may be more consciously hostile to bourgeois morality, but Mrs. Radcliffe betrays herself more suggestively than the romantic intensely at discord with his environment. In her, one more readily comprehends the total situation—the bourgeois standards and the oblique negation of those standards. Mrs. Radcliffe has a complexity all her own.

Since her work is uneven, we may depend chiefly upon the novel that was and is her best known, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794).

II

The course of the *Mysteries* is what one expects of Mrs. Radcliffe. Emily, daughter of the impoverished but well-born St. Aubert, falls in love with the high-minded and equally sensitive Valancourt, from whom she is carried away by her guardians to the sham horrors of a castle in the Apennines. After escaping from Udolpho, she learns that Valancourt, driven by hopeless love, has recklessly involved himself in financial and sexual indiscretions that prove to be the blunders of a generous spirit instead of depravity. Emily, of course, recovers an amplitude of wealth and weds a sobered Valancourt, whose brother endows him nobly. There are synthetic horrors and scenery, synthetic feelings and moralizing.

The customary historico-literary estimate of the *Mysteries* runs about as follows: that here are Beauty and Terror; that gothicism is apparent in Mrs. Radcliffe's mock-historical apparatus, in her naïve devices to effect "horror," in the obviously manipulated plot; that the sublimities of "nature" and the pantheistic rapture it inspires,

the exoticism of the setting, and the pseudo-Byronic excitements are "romantic"; that the moralizing affixed to the preposterous story is a dull conventionality. From the psychological view there is additional interest because of the apprehension, suspense, and anatomy of sensibility.

From a socio-economic point of view Mrs. Radcliffe is more perplexing. Her actual performance may be artless to the degree of naïvete. This performance is possible, however, only by certain assumptions on the part of both Mrs. Radcliffe and her reader. These assumptions—the social context of the novel—form a scheme of ambivalence that amounts to paradox and indicates deep cross-fissures running through bourgeois-romantic consciousness itself, the result of a contradiction arising between the artist and society.* What happens if one substitutes for the customary platitudes—gothicism, melodrama, sentimentality, mediaevalism, feeling for nature—another set of platitudes, an evaluation in terms of Plekhanov's dialectical materialism? According to the first system of platitudes the novel is simple; according to the second it is astonishingly equivocal. The disabilities inherent in Mrs. Radcliffe's bourgeois romanticism become very plain. Critically, the platitudes remain platitudes, of course; we are not concerned with them but with their implications, particularly in regard to the inherent "vulgarity" of an art that half retains, half rejects bourgeois standards. Mrs. Radcliffe, writing as a tradesman's daughter from the "quiet shade of domestic privacy," occupies personally a somewhat ambiguous position.

III

The thoroughgoing ambiguity in her novel lies between aesthetic values and moral values, the conservative or bourgeois values being moral, the aesthetic values being "romantic" and in a limited sense "revolutionary." Both orders of values are, ultimately, those of the bourgeoisie—the moral values in direct, the aesthetic values in inverse, relationship to that class. Insofar as the novel satisfies the bourgeois moral code, it is in danger of being aesthetically unattractive, and insofar as it succeeds in evoking its intended aesthetic responses, it is in peril of violating a bourgeois moral code. Possibly such an opposition can be resolved only in a non-bourgeois society.

* Criticisms of Mrs. Radcliffe by Alida Wieten, J. M. S. Tompkins, Ernest Baker, and others perceive inconsistencies but do not indicate their significance—a fact demonstrating the need of a fresh approach to "romanticism."

Throughout the *Mysteries* the moral responsibility (one cannot call it gravity) of the author, of her characters, and of her readers stands opposed to their aesthetic irresponsibility (not to call it frivolity). So far as the characters—and the author and reader—are morally exemplary, they embody or subscribe to bourgeois faculties for providence, caution, dependability, self-interest, discreet benevolence, and sexual reliability or “purity.” So far as characters, author, and reader are regarded aesthetically, they embody or tolerate anti-bourgeois impulses toward improvidence, instability, imprudent benevolence, and, in the case of Valancourt, a sexual waywardness that amounts to vacillation rather than Byronic naughtiness. Mrs. Radcliffe viewed in the light of socio-economic relations is thus unintentionally subversive, unwittingly ambiguous—an implied priggishness is set against an implied bohemianism: caution/incaution, selfishness/generosity, purity/impurity, etc.

All such ambiguities are left as ambiguities, without being any further resolved than Tennyson resolved the ambiguities within “Locksley Hall” or than Gray did within the “Elegy.” Historico-literary criticism, dwelling upon the mechanism and literary antecedents of the novel, is prone to ignore them. Nor do the ambiguities exist in any tension or any metaphysical balance or reconciliation of discordant qualities. The ambiguities in Mrs. Radcliffe and in the bourgeois consciousness in general—in J. S. Mill or Ruskin, for example—are latent; they do not exist so “effectively” as they do in the metaphysical mind, that is entirely conscious of its equivocations and struggles between them (as Donne struggled less blindly than Mill or Ruskin). The metaphysical mind, also, in the era of “primitive accumulation of capital,” with its activity of will imposed an order of its own upon discordant impulses. In contrast, Mrs. Radcliffe’s values are definite but unrealized. She is not fully conscious of what she is doing. Consequently the danger in reading this sort of romanticism—and the more urgent need for this kind of criticism of Mrs. Radcliffe than for that of more “conscious” writers like Henry James—is that we do not really see what it is “about,” what it involves.

Clearly Mrs. Radcliffe’s romanticism differs from the Byronic, Shelleyan, or Wordsworthian one, since there is a mode of resolution in these poets, who consciously rebel against the bourgeoisie by contempt, utopianism, or retreat. Intuiting the bourgeois-romantic dilemmas—urban/pastoral, caution/incaution, selfishness/selflessness—they attempt a resolution by simplification; Wordsworth’s resolution being pastoralism, Byron’s incaution, and Shelley’s selflessness. Such “revolutionary” romantics exist by their commitments, into which they are

forced by reaction. Yet they remain only mirror-revolutionists, since their rebellion, lacking full awareness of the historical process and failing to adjust their ego to the external world, is superficial. Mrs. Radcliffe neither realizes her dilemmas nor commits herself to resolutions. Even a complete "literary" criticism should take account of her situation and discriminate on these grounds between her romanticism and the romanticism of the poets mentioned. Scott's novels would stand, perhaps, rather near those of Mrs. Radcliffe, and also other "romantic" works by Southey, Campbell, or Rogers.

The sentimental/unsentimental ambiguity underlies many other ambiguities in the *Mysteries*, and is determined by the opposition of aesthetic response/moral response. The basic aesthetic scale is one of sensibility in the eighteenth-century sense of the word. The basic moral scale is one of shrewdness. This essentially bourgeois dilemma, expressing itself in a co-existing ethics of self-interest and an ethics of pity and in the opposition of Mandeville to Shaftesbury, of Hutcheson to Adam Smith, or within Adam Smith himself, is resolved imperfectly by charity—benevolence. Yet benevolence itself is subject to prudential check. The novels of the later eighteenth century are forever insisting on the dangers of indiscriminating bounty. St. Aubert, the father of Emily, explains that apathy is a vice, but that sensibility is a "dangerous quality" and "the romantic error of amiable minds." St. Aubert accepts the principle of charity: "Sentiment is a disgrace, instead of an ornament, unless it leads us to good actions." But the principle does not resolve the dilemma because of the chance that one may abandon himself to indiscreet charity unless he has a "temperate and uniform nature," as St. Aubert puts it. Valancourt, the hero, is deficient in this temperance and uniformity. Because of his sensibility Emily falls in love with him, but this sensibility leads him to improvidences in charity by which he is chastened to caution; then he is fit to wed Emily. Thus the novel is morally directed toward caution (enlightened self-interest) and a proper restraint of generosity while it is aesthetically directed toward an indulgence of sentiment to the degree of incaution. Socially this is an important matter, since, as Mrs. Radcliffe says elsewhere, conduct should be determined by principle, not feeling; and the application of principle to alleviating social distress leads to a program in which "to each according to his needs" is a materialistic morality motivated not by feeling but intelligence. Ruskin's "gentleman" is a vessel of romantic benevolence—"Your gentleman has walked in pity all day long; the tears have never been out of his eyes." Pity is not enough.

IV

Like all gothic romance, the *Mysteries* is projected into the past. It lacks the antiquarian mechanics of Scott's novels, though Scott exhibits the same sort of ambivalence that appears in Mrs. Radcliffe—writing upon different scales or levels of value, chronologically. Aesthetically, the level of the novel is that of the past (sixteenth-century “mediaeval”), whereas the ethical level is that of 1794. Prudential motives are transposed into a gothic *mise en scène*. As a historical novel the *Mysteries* cannot be taken seriously on any count. But we are not concerned with its failure as a historical novel. Socially this ambivalence is testimony of the alienation of the romantic artist. Mrs. Radcliffe, evidently unable to generate aesthetic values from her bourgeois environment, is forced to undertake what Ruskin or Carlyle or Morris undertook, to seek aesthetic gratification in the mediaeval, all the while maintaining, in whole or in part, prudential-acquisitive ethical standards. One aspect of this alienation is the inhibited or even feudal socialism of Ruskin and Carlyle, by which bourgeois social arrangements are modified into picturesque forms such as mediaeval guilds. A fissure opens between ethical and aesthetic-emotional values. The same dilemma plagues Catholic-Communists and the hangers-on of neo-Thomism, who are at pains to adjust thirteenth-century religious practice to twentieth-century pragmatism. (A. I. Tiumeniev has commented upon this dilemma in his essay on “Marxism and Bourgeois Historical Science”). Because the *Mysteries*, even with its barbarous sham mediaevalism of Udolpho, does not so fully exploit the past as some of Mrs. Radcliffe's other novels, such as *The Italian*, the point can be more clearly supported elsewhere in her work.

Associated with this chronological “fault” is Mrs. Radcliffe's amusing projection of British protestant, rationalist, bourgeois religious conviction into the atmosphere of mediaeval Catholicism. Nearly all her novels pass double judgment upon the conventual institutions so essential to the plots. Religiously Mrs. Radcliffe has no illusions about them: they are outmoded, benighted, and often wicked establishments that betoken superstition and popery. Emily's friend Blanche exclaims, “Who could first invent convents? and who could first persuade people to go into them? and to make religion a pretence, too, where all that should inspire it is shut out! God is best pleased with the homage of a grateful heart; and when we view his glories, we feel most grateful.” So much for mediaeval asceticism. Aesthetically the convent or monastery may represent quite different values:

... the great gate and Gothic window of the hall, the cloisters, and the side of a chapel more remote; . . . a venerable arch, which had once led to a part of the fabric now demolished, stood a majestic ruin. . . .

... while Blanche gazed with admiration on this venerable pile, whose effect was heightened by the strong lights and shadows thrown athwart it by a cloudy sunset, a sound of many voices, slowly chanting, arose from within. . . . Blanche sighed: tears trembled in her eyes, and her thoughts seemed wafted with the sounds to heaven. . . .

Substantially this is the common "romantic" response to "gothic"—the response of Horace Walpole, Sir Walter Scott, Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, and William Morris, a response in which the pragmatic and the aesthetic are entirely alien, a characteristic predicament of bourgeois romanticism. Ruskin, averse to mediaeval religious values, accepted the cathedral as symbolic of aesthetic values, meanwhile confusing his social values with both. The conclusive passage in this regard is not in *Udolpho* but *The Italian*, where the superior of the convent of Santa della Pietà runs things to the mood of Mrs. Radcliffe's bourgeois-protestant creed. This superior "conformed to the customs of the Roman church, without supposing a faith in all of them to be necessary to salvation." Thus "her religion was neither gloomy, nor bigoted" for she "seldom touched upon points of faith, but explained and enforced the moral duties." In *The Italian* the horrors of the Inquisition are evaluated by the same double vision.

The question of what seems horrible to Mrs. Radcliffe raises a question of what is horrible in the whole gothic tradition of romanticism (Parrington, for example, could have remedied his cursory treatment of Poe by asking this question). In her ingenuous way Mrs. Radcliffe specialized in horrors—confinement in charnel houses, the discovery of corpses in bizarre putrefaction, groans, worms, epitaphs, and all the graveyard goings-on that connote the "gothic." The social implications of such horror are not much examined. Authentic horror is horrible by its contexts. Psychologically, religiously, ethically the corpses in Mrs. Radcliffe do not signify. Death is a physically repulsive phenomenon, Death in the poetry of Donne or in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* connotes a psychological horror of which Mrs. Radcliffe is barren. The loathsomeness and anguish of Dante's Inferno or, again, the terror of the grave in Donne's sonnets exist by their religious references. Henry James' beast in the jungle, or the appalling Mixed Transport episode in Koestler's *Arrival and Departure*, achieve their horrors by ethical and social overtones. In Mrs. Radcliffe and romantic writers proficient in the macabre, horror causes purely aesthetic reverberations so far as it is effective at all. The reverberations—as in Maturin or the charnel passages in Lewis'

The Monk—are entirely physiological; these physiological reverberations turn out to be the aesthetic reverberations, and vice versa. This sort of “decadence” is, in its extreme, a bourgeois effect. It signifies the ultimate alienation of the writer from society and attests an art socially and religiously bankrupt, one result of a system of “naked self-interest and callous cash payment.” The situation can be accounted for by the ambiguity of Mrs. Radcliffe’s moral/unmoral orientation. Her novel purports to inculcate a bourgeois morality, as its closing words expound:

Oh! useful may it be to have shown, that though the vicious can sometimes pour affliction upon the good, their power is transient and their punishment certain; and that innocence, though oppressed by injustice, shall, supported by patience, finally triumph over misfortune!

These platitudes, morally, have no bearing upon the aesthetic significance of the book—the specific aesthetic effect being that of horror. But the horror is extraneous to the morality, in a vacuum of “pure” horror. This customary bourgeois moral/unmoral dichotomy in art results in a morality without aesthetic import and aesthetic responses of limited moral significance; in other words, myth is deprived of its deepest, most human resources. Mario Praz has recorded the history of this romantic agony.

V

Other ethical ambiguities are implicit in the *Mysteries*, notably the ambivalence of urban:bourgeois/pastoral:anti-bourgeois. The first terms condition the moral practices of the characters; the second terms condition their moral ideals. The bourgeois:urban virtues of diligence, poise, suavity, caution, calculation, sobriety are everywhere set against the anti-bourgeois:pastoral virtues of indolence, unsophistication, naive impulse, and the peasant-like innocence and improvidence transcendently elevated by Wordsworth. A similar ambiguity appears even in Byron, e.g., Manfred’s admiration of the chamois-hunter. The “pensive tranquillity” of Mrs. Radcliffe’s heroines is possible only to “honorific” leisure. Admiring the “culture” that civilizes urban society, St. Aubert, like his daughter, scorns “great cities, where selfishness, dissipation, and insincerity supply the place of tenderness, simplicity, and truth.” The old Theocritean ambivalence takes a singularly bourgeois (substantially Victorian) cast in Mrs. Radcliffe’s attitude toward wealth, which seems admirable if productive of “culture”—appreciation of scenery, the fine arts, sensitivity to suffering—but is depreciated if it is manifest in the bourgeois “coarseness” of Quesnel, a Parisian of affairs who “lived

altogether in the world" and whose taste ran to "splendor." The most explicit statement of Mrs. Radcliffe's genteel position occurs in *The Italian*, in which Ellena, of excellent breeding but pressed for cash, "passed whole days in embroidering silks, which were disposed of by the nuns of a neighboring convent, who sold them to the Neapolitan ladies, that visited their grate, at a very high advantage." This ladylike traffic at two removes epitomizes Mrs. Radcliffe's esteem of bourgeois virtues without bourgeois disabilities. Emily, of course, never handles money, nor do any of Mrs. Radcliffe's heroines.

By the same Veblenesque token the arts themselves become otiose—testaments of leisure, and of the discord between art and society. In her room adjoining the greenhouse Emily kept "her books, her drawings, her musical instruments, with some favorite birds and plants. Here she usually exercised herself in elegant arts, cultivated only because they were congenial to her taste"—i.e., useless, and economically as insignificant as the arts really are in St. George's Guild or in the visionary society of Morris. St. Aubert and Valancourt read Homer, Horace, and Petrarch because a concern with Homer, Horace, and Petrarch is of no practical effect. The arts are thus a form of commodity-fetishism. The peasants of the novel, though they dig and delve, have no ability to hunt even when they are hungry.

An especially "romantic" form of socio-economic callousness appears in the idyllic scenes of peasant life, and in Emily's insistence that "poverty cannot deprive us of intellectual delights—*so long as we are not in want of necessities*!" The Count de Villefort, with his family and Emily, go, of an evening, to the woods to enjoy "the festivity of the peasants" in a gaily festooned glade provided with "seats for the count and his family." This brand of Theocritean myth in 1794 was one aspect of a prevailing bourgeois-deistic religion of "nature." On a "still and beautiful night" Emily's well-bred mind would arise "to the adoration of the Deity, in his goodness and power: wherever she turned her view, whether on the sleeping earth, or to the vast regions of space, glowing with worlds beyond the reach of human thought, the sublimity of God and the majesty of his presence appeared. Her eyes were filled with tears of awful love and admiration. . . ." The pastoral response to peasants and starlight is actually an aesthetic one, although it implies social and religious attitudes. It is not actually Theocritean, since a legitimately Theocritean response is a conscious, sophisticated suspension of disbelief, essentially aesthetic and recreative, and for the most part dissociated from religious or ethical values. The ambiguities within a genuinely Theocritean atti-

tude are of a different order from the aesthetic/socio-economic/religious ambiguities within the *Mysteries*. Further, as the already-quoted closing words of the novel imply, a bourgeois religious faith necessitates a God of reward and punishment, whereas Emily's pantheistic optimism gushes up from the simple Wordsworthian trust that nature never betrays the heart that loves her. Wordsworth, Shelley, Byron, Carlyle, Ruskin, Morris, along with eighteenth-century deists and men of feeling were victimized by the modern confusion of aesthetic with social and religious responses.

The superficiality of romantic rebellion betrays itself in the social: democratic/unsocial: undemocratic ambiguity that terminated in "romantic isolation"—Byron's protest that "to fly from, need not be to hate, mankind" because "all are not fit with them to stir and toil." The Byronic revolt is as inconclusive as that of St. Aubert who, disillusioned with bourgeois society, becomes a mirror-revolutionist. He so little comprehends necessity that although "his principles remained unshaken, his benevolence unchilled . . . he retired from the multitude, more in *pity* than in anger, to scenes of simple nature, to the pure delights of literature, and to the exercise of domestic virtues"—Wordsworth, sensitive to the still, sad music of humanity, nevertheless found himself devoted not to men but to Man purified, the peasant removed to a transcendental distance—Michael. One recalls Shelley's frantic urge to flee to some far isle under Ionian skies where he can look tranquilly on the world's tempestuous night and where dreams do not need adjustment to reality. Prometheus thus retires with Asia. Even when romanticism cries up the rights of man (as Mrs. Radcliffe does not) the clamor is political rather than social.

The most apparent schism between Mrs. Radcliffe's bourgeois sentimentality and bourgeois ethics occurs in her pages upon love and marriage. The aesthetic values of love, such as youth, sensitivity to nature, innocence, and distress ("Her beauty, touched with the languid delicacy of illness, gained from sentiment what it lost in bloom"), are counterpoised by concern for economic security, the proprietary gestures of the male, the "purity" of the female, and her helplessness. Adeline, in *The Romance of the Forest*, intimates the dilemma of the bourgeois heroine situated between (1) a wealthy but "immoral" marquis, and (2) Theodore, who ("Let us fly; a carriage waits to receive us") has rescued her from this same marquis. "A marriage with the Marquis would be splendid," Adeline explains, "but never happy." On the other hand, she cannot wed Theodore, "to whose family and connections she had no sort of introduction." When Theodore is "raised to a post of considerable rank in the

army," Adeline finds him acceptable enough. The urban: bourgeois/pastoral: anti-bourgeois ambiguity is inherent in the relationship of all Mrs. Radcliffe's heroes and heroines. This ambiguity conditions, by attraction or repulsion, the nature of the Wordsworthian female growing in sun and shower, the Shelleyan sister: spouse, the Byronic victim: vixen, the Tennysonian *hausfrau*. Dimly understanding how "the bourgeois sees in his wife a mere instrument of production," the romantics protested by either sentimentalizing or emphatic unconventionality. Again, whatever romantic revolt occurs against proprietorship in woman is partial—a revolt by sensibility rather than by principle.

Now it is perfectly true that Scott, Byron, Wordsworth, Shelley, or Ruskin are often characterized by their differences from Mrs. Radcliffe. Yet their very differences are to be measured against the ambiguities implied in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. The socio-economic milieu in which they thought and wrote was the same as hers. It was a milieu that subjected the writer, in England at least, to the necessity either of compromise (the escapist direction of romanticism is a form of compromise) or of intransigence. Mrs. Radcliffe is no intransigent, and her awareness of her predicament is so imperfect that she cannot be said to compromise. Her fiction is meaningful because it so inadequately conceals the naked contradictions intrinsic in bourgeois romanticism, a revolt so radically inhibited that it failed to be in a deep social sense creative.

THE DEATH OF THE BALL TURRET GUNNER

From my mother's sleep I fell into the State
And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze.
Six miles from earth, loosed from its dream of life,
I woke to black flak and the nightmare fighters.
When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose.

RANDALL JARRELL

Lenin's Heir

JAMES BURNHAM

WITH THE exception of the anarchists, who have been always and consistently against any form of Bolshevism, most of us who developed an opposition to Stalinism from what we have regarded as the left were taught our first lessons by Trotsky. This primary instruction has influenced not only our subsequently reached opinions but, more enduringly, the categories and presuppositions through which we try to understand political events. Among these ideas of Trotsky's that have expanded widely beyond the narrow circles of those who have recognized any allegiance to Trotsky himself or his movement, one by no means least in consequence for the structure of political thought is his estimate of the person of Stalin.

The G. P. U. did not permit Trotsky to complete the work which he regarded as at least equal in importance to anything he had written: the biography of Stalin. Agreeing, it would seem, with the G. P. U. judgment, Harper & Bros., after printing, binding and distributing to some reviewers the unfinished manuscript, decided not to risk exposure of the then tender bud of the Four Freedoms to the intellectual virus that might have slipped with the words across the border. Nevertheless, Trotsky's estimate of Stalin, not altered in this final manuscript, which I was by chance enabled to read, is well known.

Stalin, in Trotsky's rather heavily outlined portrait, is the quintessence of mediocrity, the triumphant Babbitt of the revolution, a suburban Caesar. Crude, ignorant, provincial, uncultured, empty of creative political ideas, without imagination, he rises only because the revolution falls, he triumphs through his very lack of talent, with the help of his rudeness, his treachery, his absence of scruples, and, finally, his doggedly ambitious will. Stalin is the bureaucracy personified, the victorious "apparatus man" who, as scavenger, feasts on the scraps left behind and scorned by the heroes of the revolution. "His political horizon is restricted, his theoretical equipment primitive. . . . His mind is . . . devoid of creative imagination. . . . Stalin is the outstanding mediocrity in the party . . . the Thermidor demands

mediocrities who can't see farther than their noses. Their strength lies in their political blindness, like the mill-horse that thinks that he is moving up when really he is only pushing down the belt-wheel. . . . The strength of Stalin was never in himself but in the apparatus; or, rather, in himself so far as he was the most consummate embodiment of the apparatus. Apart from the apparatus, counterposed to the apparatus, Stalin is nothing, a mere cipher."*

To supply naturalistic detail, Trotsky stresses that: Stalin comes from a low petty-bourgeois, not proletarian, social origin; he was a native of Georgia, culturally backward province; he was educated at an inferior seminary of the intellectually debased Orthodox Church; he was distrusted from the beginning by his party colleagues; he was, prior to 1917, never elected but only "co-opted" to the Central Committee; he was never, prior to 1922 or 1923, numbered among the outstanding party leaders ("he always seemed a man destined to play second or third fiddle"); he was not a close friend of Lenin's; he was not a "mass leader" but confined his work to conspiracy and the inner-party routine; he never initiated or sponsored decisive political "theses"; he never wrote influential books or pamphlets. In the finished part of the biography, long sections are designed to give additional proof to Trotsky's often expressed contention that Stalin was an incapable military commander.

Boris Souvarine, in his history of Stalin and Bolshevism, a book, if less brilliant, more scholarly and careful than any of Trotsky's, underwrites the net estimate. Souvarine is particularly indignant at Stalin's literary style, which he finds of a degree of dullness—attributing its form in part to the influence of his seminary days at Tiflis—almost beyond endurance.

With this evaluation of Stalin's style, which has not changed with the years, we may, I think, still entirely agree. It must be that Stalin dispenses with that bourgeois luxury, the ghost writer, for there is too dreary a consistency in the banal periods of his infrequent speeches and written declarations. Never have they been illuminated or graced by a bright image or touch of wit or exciting shift of syntax. We, however, who are intellectuals and writers, breathing normally a verbalized atmosphere, tend by a professional bias to overjudge the weight of words. Politics, Hitler reminds us, are not conducted to satisfy "a few scholars or aesthetic sickly apes." If, moreover, we make a suitable dissociation of political from aesthetic sensibility, we may

* Cf. Konrad Heiden's similar estimate, false from the same cause, of Hitler: "A human nothing, a gray personality even among soldiers. . . . The void . . . had disguised itself as a man."

of the rival nations. He agreed reluctantly to the incorporation of Lorraine into the Reich because of Moltke's "strategical reasons"; but he did not want foreign splinters within the German frontiers and had not the slightest ambition to rule foreign peoples as subject races.

What is true of German political history is even more true of the spiritual roots attributed to Nazism. Nazism owes nothing to any part of the Western tradition, be it German or not, Catholic or Protestant, Christian, Greek or Roman. Whether we like Thomas Aquinas or Machiavelli or Luther or Kant or Hegel or Nietzsche—the list may be prolonged indefinitely as even a cursory glance at the literature of the "German problem" will reveal—they have not the least responsibility for what is happening in the extermination camps. Ideologically speaking, Nazism begins with no traditional basis at all, and it would be better to realize the danger of this radical negation of any tradition, which was the main feature of Nazism from the beginning (though not of Fascism in its first Italian stages). It was after all the Nazis themselves who were the first to surround their utter emptiness with the smoke-screen of learned interpretations. Most of the philosophers at present slandered by the over-zealous experts of the "German problem" have long been claimed by the Nazis as their own—not because the Nazis cared about respectability but simply because they realized that there is no better hiding-place than the great playground of history and no better bodyguard than the children of that playground, the easily employed and easily deluded "experts."

The very monstrosities of the Nazi regime should have warned us that we are dealing here with something inexplicable even by reference to the worst periods of history. For never, neither in ancient nor medieval nor modern history, did destruction become a well-formulated program or its execution a highly organized, bureaucratized and systematized process. It is true that militarism has a relation to the efficiency of the Nazi war machine and that imperialism has much to do with its ideology. But to approach Nazism you have to empty militarism of all its inherited warrior's virtues and imperialism of all its inherent dreams of empire-building, such as the "white man's burden." In other words, one may easily find certain trends in modern political life which in themselves point toward fascism and certain classes which are more easily won and more easily deceived than others—but all must change their basic functions in society before Nazism can actually make use of them. Before the war is over the German military caste, certainly one of the most disgusting institutions, ridden by stupid arrogance and an upstart tradition,

will be destroyed by the Nazis together with all other German traditions and time-honored institutions. German militarism as represented in the German army scarcely had more ambition than the old French army of the Third Republic: the German officers wanted to be a State within a State, and they foolishly assumed that the Nazis would serve them better than the Weimar Republic. They were already in a state of dissolution when they discovered their mistake—one part was liquidated and the other adjusted itself to the Nazi regime.

It is true that the Nazis have occasionally spoken the language of militarism as they have spoken the language of nationalism; but they have spoken the language of every existing ism—socialism and communism not excluded. This has not prevented them from liquidating socialists and communists and nationalists and militarists, all of them dangerous bedfellows for the Nazis. Only the experts with their fondness for the spoken or written word and incomprehension of political realities have taken these utterances of the Nazis at face value and interpreted them as the consequence of certain German or European traditions. On the contrary, Nazism is actually the breakdown of all German and European traditions, the good as well as the bad.

2.

Many premonitory signs announced the catastrophe which has threatened European culture for more than a century and which was divined though not correctly described in Marx's well-known words regarding the alternative between socialism and barbarism. During the last war this catastrophe became visible in the form of the most violent destructiveness ever experienced by the European nations. From then on nihilism changed its meaning. It was no longer a more or less harmless ideology, one of the many competing ideologies of the nineteenth century; it no longer remained in the quiet realm of mere negation or mere scepticism or mere foreboding despair. Instead it began basing itself on the intoxication of destruction as an actual experience, dreaming the stupid dream of producing the void. The devastating experience was enormously strengthened during the aftermath of the war, when through inflation and unemployment the same generation was thrown into the opposite situation of utter helplessness and passivity within the framework of a seemingly normal society. When the Nazis appealed to the famous *Fronterlebnis* (battlefront experience), they not only aroused memories of the *Volks-gemeinschaft* (people's community) of the trenches, but even more

the sweet recollections of a time of extraordinary activity and power of destruction enjoyed by the individual.

It is true that the situation in Germany lent itself more readily than anywhere else to the breaking of all traditions. This is connected with the late development of the Germans as a nation, their unfortunate political history and lack of any kind of democratic experience. It is more closely connected with the fact that the post-war situation of inflation and unemployment—without which the destructive power of the *Fronterlebnis* might have remained a temporary phenomenon—took hold of more people in Germany and affected them more profoundly than elsewhere.

But though it may have been easier to break European traditions and standards in Germany, it is still true that these had to be broken, so that it was not any German tradition as such but the violation of all traditions which brought about Nazism. How strongly Nazism appealed to the veterans of the last war in all countries is shown by the almost universal influence it wielded in all veteran organizations of Europe. The veterans were the first sympathizers, and the first steps the Nazis took in the field of foreign relations were frequently calculated to arouse those "comrades-in-arms" beyond the frontiers who were sure to understand their language and to be moved by like emotions and a like desire for destruction.

This is the only tangible psychological meaning of the "German problem." The real trouble lies not in the German national character but rather in the disintegration of this character, or at least in the fact that it no longer plays any role in German politics. It is as much a thing of the past as German militarism or nationalism. It will not be possible to revive it by copying out mottoes from old books or even by adopting extreme political measures. But a greater trouble still is this, that the man who has replaced *the German*—namely the type who in sensing the danger of utter destruction decides to turn himself into a destroying force—is not confined to Germany alone. The Nothing from which Nazism sprang could be defined in less mystical terms as the vacuum resulting from an almost simultaneous breakdown of Europe's social and political structures. Restoration is so violently opposed by the European resistance movements precisely because they know that the very same vacuum would thus be produced, a vacuum of which they live in mortal fear even though by now they have learned that it is the "lesser evil" to fascism. The tremendous psychological appeal exercised by Nazism was not so much due to its false promises as to its frank recognition of this vacuum. Its immense lies fitted the vacuum; these lies were psychologically efficient because

they corresponded to certain fundamental experiences and even more to certain fundamental cravings. One can say that to some extent fascism has added a new variation to the old art of lying—the most devilish variation—that of *lying* the truth.

The truth was the class structure of European society could no longer function: it simply could no longer work either in its feudal form in the East or in its bourgeois form in the West. Not only did its intrinsic lack of justice become more obvious daily; it was constantly depriving millions and millions of individuals of any class-status whatever (through unemployment and other causes). The truth was that the national State, once the very symbol of the sovereignty of the people, no longer represented the people, becoming incapable of safeguarding either its external or internal security. Whether Europe had become too small for this form of organization or whether the European peoples had outgrown the organization of their national states, the truth was that they no longer behaved like nations and could no longer be aroused by national feelings. Most of them were unwilling to wage a national war—not even for the sake of their independence.

This social truth of the breakdown of European class-society was answered by the Nazis with the lie of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, based on complicity in crime and ruled by a bureaucracy of gangsters. The declassed could sympathize with this answer. And the truth of the decline of the national State was answered by the famous lie of the New Order in Europe which debased peoples into races and prepared them for extermination. The gullibility of the European peoples—who in so many cases let the Nazis into their countries because the Nazi lies alluded to certain fundamental truths—has cost them an enormous price. But they have learned at least one great lesson: that none of the old forces which produced the maelstrom of the vacuum is so terrible as the new force which springs from this maelstrom and whose aim is to organize people according to the law of the maelstrom—which is destruction itself.

3.

The European resistance movements arose among the same peoples who in 1938 had hailed the Munich agreements and in whom the outbreak of the war aroused only dismay. These movements came into being only when the nationalists of all shades and the preachers of hate had had their opportunity to turn collaborationist, so that the almost inevitable inclination of nationalists toward fascism and

of chauvinists toward subservience to the foreign invader had been proven to entire populations. (The few exceptions were such old-fashioned nationalists as de Gaulle or the journalist Kerillis; but they only proved the rule.) The underground movements, in other words, were the immediate product of the collapse, first, of the national State, which was replaced by quisling governments, and second, of nationalism itself as the driving force of nations. Those who emerged to wage war fought against fascism and nothing else. And this is not surprising; what is surprising precisely because of its strict, almost logical, consequence is rather that all of these movements at once found a positive political slogan which plainly indicated the non-national though very popular character of the new struggle. That slogan was simply EUROPE.

Hence it is natural that the "German problem," as presented by the experts, should have awakened very little interest in the European Resistance. It was recognized at once that the old insistence on the "German problem" would only becloud the issues of the "ideological war" and that the outlawing of Germany would prevent a solution of the European question. Members of the underground were therefore concerned with the "German problem" only to the extent that it is part and parcel of the European problem. Many a well-meaning correspondent, who has learned his lesson from the experts on Germany, was shocked by the absence of personal hatred against Germans and by the presence, in the liberated countries, of political hatred for fascists, collaborationists and their like, of no matter what nationality.

The words which Georges Bidault, former chief of the French Resistance and now foreign minister, spoke to the wounded German soldiers immediately after the liberation of Paris, sound like a simple and splendid expression of the sentiments of those who fought against Nazi Germany not with their pens but with their lives. He said: "German soldiers, I am the chief of the Resistance. I have come to wish you good health. May you soon find yourselves in a free Germany and a free Europe."

The insistence on Europe even at such a moment is characteristic. Any other words would not have corresponded to the conviction that the European crisis is first of all a crisis of the national State. In the words of the Dutch underground: "We are experiencing at present . . . a crisis of state sovereignty. One of the central problems of the coming peace will be: how can we, while preserving cultural autonomy, achieve the formation of larger units in the political and economic field? . . . A good peace is now inconceivable unless the

states surrender parts of their economic and political sovereignty to a higher European authority: we leave open the question whether a European Council, or Federation, a United States of Europe or whatever type of unit will be formed."

It is obvious that for these men, the true *homi novi* of Europe, the "German problem" is not, as it is for de Gaulle, the "center of the universe," not even the center of Europe. Their main enemy is fascism, not Germany; their main problem is the crisis of all State organizations of the Continent, not merely the German or Prussian State; their center of gravity is France, the country which has truly been, culturally as well as politically, the heart of Europe for centuries and whose more recent contributions to political thought have again put her at the spiritual head of Europe. In this connection it was more than significant that the liberation of Paris was celebrated in Rome with more enthusiasm than even its own liberation; and that the message of the Dutch Resistance to the French Forces of the Interior after the liberation of Paris concluded with the words: "So long as France lives, Europe will not die."

For those who have known Europe intimately during the period between the two wars it must have come almost as a shock to see how quickly the same peoples that only a few years ago were not at all concerned with questions of political structure have now discovered the primary conditions for the future existence of the European continent. Under Nazi oppression they have not only re-learned the meaning of freedom but won back their self-respect as well as a new appetite for responsibility. This is clearly enough manifested in all the former monarchies where—to the surprise and dismay of some observers—the people want most of all a republican regime. In France, a country of mature republican traditions, the repudiation of the old centralized forms of government, which left very little responsibility to the individual citizen, is gaining ground; the search for some new form, giving the citizen more of the duties as well as the rights and honors of public life, is characteristic of all factions.

The cardinal principle of French resistance was *liberer et federer*; and by federation was meant a federated structure of the Fourth Republic (in opposition to the "centralist State which is bound to become totalitarian") integrated in a European Federation. It is in almost identical terms that the French, Czech, Italian, Norwegian and Dutch underground papers insist on this as the primary condition of a lasting peace—although, so far as I know, only the French underground has gone so far as to state that a federative structure of

Europe must be based on similarly federated structures in the constituent states.

Equally universal though not equally new are the demands of a social and economic nature. All want a change in the economic system, control of wealth, nationalization and public ownership of basic resources and major industries. Here again, the French have some ideas of their own. As Saillant put it, they do not want "a rehash of some socialist or other kind of program," for they are mainly concerned with "the defense of that human dignity for which the men of the Resistance fought and sacrificed." The danger of an *etatism envahissant* they hope to avert by giving the workers and the technical personnel of each factory a stake in the results of production and the consumers a decisive voice in the management.

It was necessary to sketch at least this general programmatic framework because only in its terms does the answer to the "German problem" make sense. Conspicuous by its absence is Vansittartism of any kind. A French officer, one of those who with the help of the German underground escape daily from the Nazi prisoner-camps, draws a distinction in this respect between prisoners and the people at home, who hate the Germans more than they do. "Our hatred, the violent hatred of the prisoners, is aimed at the collaborationists, the profiteers and their like, at all who have helped the enemy—and there are three millions of us. . . ."

The Polish socialist paper *Freedom* has warned against the yearning for revenge because this "can easily change into the desire to dominate other nations, and thus, after the defeat of Nazism, its very methods and ideas would again triumph." Very similar statements have been made by the movements of all other countries. This fear of falling into some kind of racism after the defeat of its German variety motivates the general renunciation of the idea of dismembering Germany. In this as in many other questions the disagreement between the underground movements and the Governments-in-exile is nearly complete. Thus de Gaulle claimed the annexation of the Rhineland while still in exile, only to reverse his position a few weeks later when, upon entering Paris after its liberation, he stated that all that France wanted was an active share in the occupation of the Rhineland.

However, the Dutch, the Poles, the Norwegians and the French stand as one behind the program of nationalizing German heavy industry, liquidating the Junkers and industrialists as social classes, complete disarmament and control of industrial output. Some look forward to the establishment of a German federal administration. The

French Socialist Party has declared that this program "must be put into effect with the closest fraternal collaboration of German democrats"; and all programs conclude with the admonition that to deliver "seventy million people in the heart of Europe to economic misery" (Norwegians) is to vitiate the ultimate aim of "receiving Germany into the community of European nations and a planned European economy" (Dutch).

To think in terms of the European underground is to realize that the much-debated alternatives of a soft or hard peace for Germany have little bearing on the problem of her future sovereignty. Thus the Dutch contend that "the problem of equality of rights would not be a matter of restoring sovereign rights to the defeated state but of granting it a limited influence within the European Council or Federation." The French, planning for a period when the non-European armies of occupation will have left the continent and when they would again be faced by issues of strictly European reference, have warned that "essential restrictions on German sovereignty can be envisaged without difficulty only if all the states likewise accept significant limitations on their own sovereignty."

Long before the Morgenthau plan became known the underground movements rejected any such idea of destroying German industry. The rejection is so general that it becomes superfluous to quote special sources. The reasons are obvious: there is an overwhelming and altogether justified fear that half of Europe would starve if German industry ceased to function.

Instead of destroying this industry what is proposed is control of it, not so much by any particular country or people as by a European advisory council which together with German representatives would assume the responsibility of its management for the purpose of stimulating production and directing distribution. Most remarkable among the economic plans for the European use of German industry is the French program which was tentatively discussed before the liberation. This program calls for the combining in one single economic system, without changing national borderlines, the industrial regions of western Germany, the Ruhr, the Saar, the Rhineland and Westphalia with the industrial regions of eastern France and Belgium.

But this willingness to come to terms with a future Germany is not to be explained merely by calculations of economic welfare or even by the natural feeling that no matter what the Allied Governments may decide the Germans will stay in Europe for good. It is also necessary to take into account the fact that the European Resistance has in many instances fought side by side with German anti-fascists

and deserters from the Reichswehr. The Resistance knows of the existence of a German underground, for the millions of foreign workers and prisoners of war in the Reich have had ample opportunities to avail themselves of its services. A French officer, describing how French prisoners in Germany made contact with French forced labor and with the underground in France proper, speaks of the German underground in matter of fact terms, emphasizing that such contact would have been impossible "without the active help of German soldiers and workers." He speaks, too, of having left "many good friends among the Germans before we cut through the barbed wire." Even more striking is his disclosure that the German underground counts on the help of Frenchmen in Germany "at the moment of the final coup" and that organized cooperation between the two groups had led to the divulgence to the French of the location of the arms stored by the German underground.

These details are cited in order to make clear the actual experience underlying the programs of the Resistance with respect to Germany. This experience has in turn made more cogent the attitude that has for some years now been characteristic of European anti-fascists and which has recently been defined by Bernanos as "*l'espoir en des hommes dispersés à travers l'Europe, séparés par les frontières et par la langue, et qui n'ont guère de commun entre eux que l'expérience du risque et l'habitude de ne pas céder à la menace.*"

4.

The return of the Governments-in-exile may quickly put a stop to this new feeling of European solidarity, for the very existence of these governments depends on the restoration of the status quo. Hence their inveterate tendency is to weaken and disperse the resistance movements with the aim of destroying the political renaissance of the European peoples.

Restoration in Europe appears today in the form of three fundamental concepts. First there arose the concept of collective security, which is in reality not a new concept but one taken over from the happy times of the Holy Alliance; it was revived after the last war in the hope that it would serve as a check on nationalistic aspirations and aggression. If this system went to pieces, however, it was not because of such aggression but because of the intervention of ideological factors. Thus Poland, for instance, though threatened by Germany, refused the help of the Red Army in spite of the fact that in her case collective security could hardly go into effect without such help. The

strategical security of frontiers was sacrificed because the main aggressor—Germany—stood as the embodiment of the struggle against Bolshevism. It is plain that the system of collective security can be restored only on the pre-supposition that the obstructive ideological factors no longer exist. Such pre-suppositions are illusory, however.

In order to avert clashes between the ideological forces which are to be found in all nations, the second policy was introduced—that of clearly demarcated spheres of interest. This is a policy that derives from colonial imperialist methods, methods that now recoil upon Europe. It is not likely, however, that anyone will succeed in treating Europeans like colonials at a time when even the colonial countries are manifestly on their way to independence. Still more unrealistic is the hope that on so small and so thickly populated a territory as Europe it will prove possible to erect walls that shut off nation from nation and prevent the interaction of ideological forces.

At this moment we are witnessing the resurrection of the good old bi-lateral alliance which seems to have become the favored political instrument of the Kremlin. This last piece borrowed from the vast arsenal of power-politics has only one meaning, and that is the re-employment of nineteenth century political instruments whose ineffectiveness was discovered and denounced after the last war. Actually, what such bi-lateral agreements come to in the end is that the stronger partner of any so-called Alliance dominates the weaker, politically and ideologically.

The Governments-in-exile, being interested only in restoration as such, waver pitifully between these alternatives and are ready to accept almost anything offered by any of the Big Three—collective security, sphere of interest or Alliance. Among them de Gaulle must be conceded a special position. Unlike the others, he represents not the forces of yesterday but is rather a solitary reminder of the forces before yesterday—a time which, whatever its faults, was considerably more propitious to human purposes than the recent past. In other words, he alone truly represents patriotism and nationalism in the old sense. When his former comrades in the French Army and the *Action Francaise* turned traitors and pacifism seized France like a fever and the ruling classes rushed to collaborate, he did not even understand what was happening. In a sense, he had the good fortune to be unable to believe his eyes—to believe, that is, that Frenchmen did not want a national war against Germany. All that he has done since he has done for the sake of the nation, and his patriotism is so deeply rooted in the popular will that the Resistance, *i.e.* the people, was able to support and influence his policies. De Gaulle, who is the only national

statesman left in Europe, is the only one who is sincere when he says that the "German problem is the center of the universe." For him the war is really a national and not an ideological conflict. What he wants for France is as large a share as possible in the defeat of Germany. His appetite for annexation has been checked by the Resistance; the new proposal, allegedly accepted by Stalin, which looks towards the creation of a separate German State in the Rhineland under Allied or French control, suggests a compromise between his previous plans for annexations and the hopes of the Resistance for a federated Germany and a European-controlled German economy.

Restoration has started very logically with restoring the endless borderline disputes in which only a few old-time nationalists are vitally interested. Despite the strong protests of the underground movements of their respective countries, all Governments-in-exile have put forth territorial demands. These demands, backed and possibly inspired by London, can be fulfilled only at the expense of the defeated, and if there is not much joy at the prospect of acquiring new territories it is because no one seems to know how to solve the inherent population problems. The minority treaties which were expected to work miracles after the last war are utterly disregarded today though no one has any confidence in the only alternative, which is assimilation. This time one hopes to solve the problem by means of population-transfers; the Czechs were the first to announce their determination to liquidate the minority treaties and to deport two million Germans to the Reich. The other Governments-in-exile have followed suit and pronounced similar plans for the Germans found on the ceded territories—many millions of them.

But if such population-transfers actually take place they will be followed not only by an indefinite prolongation of chaos but perhaps by something even more sinister. The ceded territories will prove to be underpopulated and the neighbors of Germany will find themselves unable to populate them properly and to profit from the available resources. This would in turn lead either to re-immigration of German manpower, thus reproducing the old dangers, or to a situation where an over-crowded country with highly skilled labor-power and a highly developed technique is forced into developing ingenious industrial methods to keep going. The result of such "punishment" would prove to be exactly the same as that of the Versailles Treaty, also thought of as a reliable instrument for crushing Germany's economic power but which turned out to be the very cause of the over-rationalization and amazing growth of Germany's industrial capacity. Since in our time manpower is far more important than territories and

technical skill combined with a high level of scientific research more promising than raw materials, we may very well be on the way to creating in the midst of Europe a gigantic powder-keg whose explosive capacity will surprise tomorrow's statesmen as much as the rise of defeated Germany surprised the statesmen of yesterday.

The Morgenthau plan, finally, seems to offer a definitive solution. But this plan can hardly be relied on to convert Germany into a nation of small farmers—because no power would undertake to exterminate the thirty or so million Germans too many. Any serious attempt to do so would in all probability bring about that “revolutionary situation” which those who want restoration fear more than anything else.

Restoration thus promises nothing. If it succeeded the process of the past thirty years might commence over again, this time at a greatly accelerated tempo. For restoration must begin precisely with the restoration of the “German problem”! The vicious circle in which all discussions of the “German problem” move shows clearly the utopian character of “realism” and power-politics in their application to the real issues of our time. The only alternative to these antiquated methods which could not even preserve peace, let alone guarantee freedom, is the course taken by the European Resistance.

A Rhapsodic Age?

RAMÓN J. SENDER

SOUTH AMERICA, if we are to judge from appearances, is still living in the early time of the rhapsodists. She is fortunate in that none of the forms of her civilization—economic, social, political, literary—has reached that peak where its very weight enforces its decline. Everywhere there are broad wings and plenty of space in which to spread them. And faithful to her hour, South America is producing poets and poetry. This poetry, since the time of Rubén Darío—whose vigor was godfather to an entire generation, of Spaniards no less than Spanish-Americans—lays bare before us the strata of its development, alive and in action; for in each country we still find Symbolists and Parnassians tending towards Modernism, and Modernists disintegrating into Ultraism, Surrealism, Creationism, and other movements—movements not only sharply defined and active, but engaged in conflict. This conflict is periodically embodied in anthologies; and the war of the anthologies, from Mexico to the Argentine, is a curious and reassuring phenomenon: for no one will deny that the discussion of poetry is one of the highest proofs of civilization that a society can give.

We are accustomed to talk about 'French influences,' but in reality nations do not have a distinctive lyric or epic or dramatic character. Poetry has no nationality; and as for creeds, though religions have their many temples with their varied rites, in poetry there is only one priest between God and the world. That priest is the poet. Baudelaire yesterday, or Valéry today, is a force of irradiation sufficiently strong to reach South America at the same time that it reaches Madrid. The poets of Argentina and of Mexico are used to receiving them directly, as one would expect. Sometimes, indeed, they reach this side of the Atlantic before they get to the Calle de Alcalá. While Rubén Darío was still quaffing the wines of Castille from 'the cup of France,' Juan Valera—the most liberal spirit in Spanish letters—was saying of Baudelaire that he succeeded through cheap sensationalism, and was being astonished by the lyricism of Hugo, who speaks of the 'black egg of the heavens' and permits himself to refer to God as a

'melancholy muleteer.' If the South Americans had to wait for European thought until Spain or the gallicized Spanish poets got around to giving it their blessing, they would be backward indeed. Certainly I shall not be the one to invite them to accept the values established by the academicians of Madrid; for they would tell me, and very reasonably, too, that a country which rejects Picasso and shoots García Lorca has no standing except among the dark preserves of barbarism. On the other hand, both Picasso and Lorca are immensely influential in South America despite the blindly accepted *dicta* of the 'Spanish literary world.' The young poets of Argentina, Mexico, Cuba, Uruguay and Chile know very well where to look for their sources.

But the miracle of Darío could still repeat itself; and if currents of thought circulated as easily today as they did in 1902, we should have South American poets casting their shadow over Spain.

When I spoke of a flowering of rhapsodists, did I mean to imply a lack of other forms of expression? It seems to me that the pre-eminent value of the novel is analysis; and with peoples, just as with individuals, analysis is an act of maturity. The novel demands points of departure, elements validated by a network of commonly accepted concepts of a poetic nature. That is to say, it needs an already established imagery. The relation of the earth to man, of man to destiny, is full of incidents in which new forms become apparent little by little. In this process the language of the metropolis gradually takes on its proper accent, its flourishes, its colors; and in it society finds its expression as it unfolds and grows in love, in religion, in the thousand and one forms of the struggle against the Nature which is forests and mountains, or the thinking nature of mankind. In this mythology poets have a place of honor, and all beings and all familiar things an active part: the horse in the Argentine, the cactus in Mexico, the native flute in Peru. When such a mythology is an active force, it is very easy to generate the novel; and it is because of the novel that the mythology achieves its complexity and draws forth, so to speak, judgments of value.

We cannot imagine a Balzac in the twelfth century. Then, the caterpillars of the popular imagination were laying their eggs in the fabliaux and the trouvères. If the novel flourished first in Spain, with *Amadis*, the *Quijote*, and Montemayor's *Diana*, the reason is that Spain was reaping the full foison of her medieval harvest, which was by far the richest in Europe. In South America, the novel exists in countries with an already established rhapsodic imagery. The clearest

proof is in Argentina. Her *gauchos*, firmly placed between the land and their own fate, lived on the great plains which were at once their cradle and their grave and which stretched away in every direction with the sadness which is typical of flat, unpeopled horizons. The torrent of their songs and dances formed an epic which lacked only anonymity to be ranked with its ancestors, *Roland* and *The Cid*—this was *Martín Fierro*. And since then, among other novels and surpassing them all, they have had their *Don Segundo Sombra*.

They have their *gaucho* in Mexico, too, although his characteristics are different. He is the *charro*—the same spurs, the same sombrero (relics of the Spanish Conquest which extend as far north as Arizona and New Mexico, with their cowboy), and the melancholy which is different from the melancholy of the pampas in that the latter is pure-white, while the Mexican is mixed with the Indian. The *charro* has his own polished idiom, which expresses itself in verse like prose and in prose which sounds like verse; and if it has not reached the heights of Argentinean literature, it is because the Mexican has neglected the colonial forms in order to investigate his sources in the pre-Columbian civilization, which is satanically rich and suggestive. The Argentines, having almost no Indians, have never been swerved from their colonial tradition, which they accept as the national origin and foundation.

Three powerful myths challenge the imagination of America, and all three are of Spanish origin: the *gaucho*, the *charro* and the cowboy. The three are brothers. If the United States has produced no great novels about the cowboy—who also has his spurs and his big sombrero—it is perhaps because the myth is not native to the language; its essence is not Anglo-Saxon. On the other hand, it does recover the freshness of its source in the ballads collected by Sandburg, which recall the ballads of Spain. Certainly there is an American mythology which is more potent than that of the rancher of the Southwest; but to what extent can it claim to speak in language rising from the interrelation of man and earth when it is set beside the prejudices of European culture? To what degree have these characteristic forms altered the shape of language? It would seem that the American novel has in its time been romantic; then naturalistic; and that it presents today those qualities of academic perfection or revolutionary purpose which are peculiar to the cultures of Europe. And this raises a question which is pertinent to the cultural panorama of the peoples of South America. May it not be that America, the whole of America, north and south, is living in the very age of the rhapsodists? May it

not be that Walt Whitman's cycle is still open? and that here, too, poetry is the field of true originality?

South America suggests a curious speculation which has its bearing upon cultural inheritances. It is a problem which concerns the individual in his laboratory as well as the collective life of a people or a nation. Many of the myths are disappearing in Europe. There is no doubt that something came to an end with Joyce, just as, earlier, something ended with Proust. Both of these authors closed cycles which will never be opened again. And now, while the new era is beginning (or perhaps not beginning), we have with us certain writers who counterfeit a continuance of the old—the most characteristic of these being Paul Valéry. But this fictive survival, with its 'empirical empyreans,' deceives only the simple-minded. The destructive tendencies ravaging the younger generation in Europe are greeted with a half-smile by the experienced, who know that no continuity is possible, that something has been broken, and that we must begin all over again, naked feet firm upon the naked ground.

At the same time, these 'destructive' influences are received in South America as naturally as a forest enriches itself with dead leaves. And there is nothing more curious than the fragrance which old tormented Europe takes on in the poetry of the Mexican López Velarde, for instance, and the Peruvian César Vallejo: dead youths surrounded by their treasure: the first with his stormy, primitive sensuality, and Vallejo with his asceticism, also traditional, in which we come upon tidy deserts, dry river-beds of stone predicting cloudbursts whose very absence makes them more actual than their actuality. In these two poets, so different, we find all the elegant decadence of Europe—we could localize it, trait by trait; and yet, not only does it not decline in them, but it takes on an affirmative, rising tone. The same is true of Pablo Neruda, although his technic is still different. As for the North Americans, I unfortunately know too little English to be able to speak of them from direct experience; but what I have been able to discover leads me to believe that they manifest a similar phenomenon. And if this is so, is not the United States, like Mexico and Argentina, living in the age of the rhapsodists? And may not this be the reason why the miracle of inheritance is more clearly evident on this continent than elsewhere?

In the novel, we saw that the greatest works are following in the tracks of European naturalistic psychologism and impressionism without adding anything that is substantially American. Is not the case different with poetry? Is not a rich, poetic American mythology,

expressed though it may be in uncertain accents, preferable to the precise European perfection of the well made novels? And if an inherited perfection were to be added to this primitive freshness, a great American poetry would arise beside America's skyscrapers, 'European novels' and factories. The greater part of the Latin-American countries, for all their lack of skyscrapers and factories, are enjoying the richness of a lyric age. Cuba, Mexico, Argentina, Uruguay, Chile—here, through the dark Unconscious, speaks a land with its own forms; and through poetry speaks a powerful Unconscious, more or less illumined by the lights of Europe. I should like to contribute, even on my modest scale, to the awakening of your interest in the agreeable subject of Spanish-speaking verse. For ourselves, constantly exposed to the attraction of the great American cities, there is nothing more reassuring than the prospect of finding parallel currents here. It is true, of course, that South America has something which we cannot obtain easily and which is absolutely necessary for all this—I mean leisure. For if the old Spaniards used to say that 'leisure is the father of all the vices,' we must not forget that the first of those vices is poetry, and that poetry—in the sphered relationship of all things—is the mother of all the virtues.

(Translated from the Spanish by Dudley Fitts)

Mr. Agee and The New Yorker

JAMES GROSSMAN

SOME TIME ago Mr. Agee wrote in the *PARTISAN REVIEW** about the pseudo-folk art in plays like *Carmen Jones*, *Oklahoma*, the Robeson *Othello*. Mr. Agee disliked the plays so much that, as he went on to say, he had not seen them. I read the piece hastily and do not remember it very well but it seemed to state a sound and interesting theory, even if one might disagree on details, something I was not inclined to do because I had seen none of the plays myself.

Mr. Agee's criticism is always good and it was therefore pleasant to see this particular piece discussed in *The New Yorker*. But it was quite surprising that the discussion was not at all about his views—whether, say, *Othello* is folk art, and if such, pseudo—but entirely on the point that Mr. Agee had not seen the work on which he was expressing an opinion. Although there was some recognition of the advantage Mr. Agee had over his colleagues in being able to polish his writing while they were busily attending the theatre, the general tone was disapproving: Mr. Agee's procedure was unfair and somehow wrong. I am not sure why; I heard *The New Yorker* paragraph read several times but always with so strong an effect on others present that I could never be sure of its exact meaning. Each person who read it made it sound like a proof of something he had always suspected but had never dared to say himself: Intellectuals were fakes, and now at last one was being caught in the act.

This effect need not concern us for certainly it was not intended; in any event the life of the mind has managed to take care of itself, precariously enough it is true, for thousands of years and will somehow survive this blow. The real point of interest, and it is the subject of the present inquiry, is how any one, whether amusingly or unamusingly, could come to the conclusion that because a man had not seen certain plays he should not write about them.

Mr. Agee's actual procedure was scientific in the extreme. He had heard the opinion of friends who had liked the plays and of friends who had not liked them. That is, although he had not been there he had seen his object from two separate and known points of view and had placed it accordingly. This is the precise method used in map making. How often we were told in trigonometry class that if ever we wanted to map

*See Spring, 1944 issue, p.219.

an inaccessible point across a river, we had only to measure the angles made with the trans-river point by any two known points on our side, and then the trans-river point would be as well mapped as if we had been there. The river was but an instance; one might stay at home and measure the sun and the moon. It is discouraging on leaving the classroom to see the method literally applied by Mr. Agee and to a more modest project, and to find his use of the method authoritatively denounced. If Mr. Agee must go, trigonometry must go.

An uneasy feeling persists that Mr. Agee's error is not in his process but in revealing it; he is not at odds with science but with conventions of criticism. Perhaps, then, we should examine the true nature of the rule which he has broken.

It is all right for the book reviewer to dip and read no more; it is all right for the play reviewer to leave after the first act. These are perfectly appropriate ways of expressing an unfavorable judgment. But the critic is not permitted to carry these practices openly to their logical conclusion. A book or a play may be so bad that he can only take a small part of it, but apparently must never be so bad that he can admit to having taken none of it. Incidentally it is an interesting difference in the conventions of stage and reading that a bad play must be seen if not in its entirety at least from the beginning—when there is no music one cannot drop in at the middle of an act; while a book, like a musical play, can be damned from any random passage. The permissible variations in practice are so numerous and the requirement that the critic must give some direct attention to a work, is so easily satisfied, as to indicate that it is not related to the actual functioning of criticism but is one of its ceremonial necessities, like putting in an appearance in performance of a social obligation.

After all, to stay away altogether is the only true appreciation of really bad art. If this admits of refinement it is solely in terms of who stays away. Yet it is everyone's privilege to pass this judgment, even those who never go, and it is denied only to the professional critic—presumably the one most fit to make it. He is allowed to preach total abstinence on condition that his practice belies his preachment.

The rule that a critic must always decide on the basis of his own experience applies only when he condemns; it is not always necessary when he approves. He may judge many works unread and unseen, so long as his judgment is favorable. His very inability to experience them is often the soundest ground for his praise.

From what he is unable to experience to what is difficult is only a step, but it separates the critical ignorance which may be admitted from that which must be concealed. "Difficult," when applied to a work of fiction, is a critical term meaning that it takes more time to read than a reviewer can afford to spend. Since it is a mere trade necessity which

makes the difficult unreadable, the reviewer in praising it is under the disadvantage of not being able to state frankly that he does not know what he is talking about. This treatment of the difficult has sometimes had strange results, as in the case of Henry James.

The later novels of James were considered so important that, as Ford Madox Ford has somewhere explained, they had to be reviewed immediately upon publication; reading came later if ever. The reviewer who does not want to give himself away, like the funeral orator who does not want to give away the deceased, can safely be only vague and reverential; the real life of the subject must be shunned. So convincing was the funereal piety of the reviews, so successfully did they avoid any stir of life, that their deadness was assumed to be a quality of the author himself, and during the years of his best work he was often referred to as the late Henry James; until several acts of violence—the damage by English suffragettes to the Sargent portrait of him, and the German invasion of Belgium which made him become an English citizen—brought him universal recognition as a great living English writer.

The amount of praise given to an unknown work of art varies inversely with the ease with which critical ignorance of it may be overcome. This may in part be the reason for the greater success of Joyce in his lifetime than of James in his. But each was alike in always giving the clearest indication that time (sooner for one than the other, but inevitably for each) would bring his work to the light of day and compel a reckoning with him as knowable artist.

Ignorance is invincible only as to those unknown works of art which must forever continue unknown for the reason that they do not exist; at some point or other of time they have been lost without adequate memory or remains. The lost plays of Menander have suffered somewhat because the comedy of manner is now under a cloud, but they are still the finest of their kind; Stevenson does not count for much today, but the novel which his wife threw into the fire is still his best effort; research has discovered Greek painting, but the greatest Greek painters are those who have escaped survival. Time cannot undo such verdicts. It works against all other ignorances; but this ignorance it has committed itself irrevocably to protect. It would be a diseased imagination which would dare suggest that Mrs. Stevenson may have been right and that the burned novel was just dreary stuff.

On occasion something close to the supreme aesthetic effect of a lost work is achieved even by work which is peculiarly present. The funniest lines of Preston Sturges are those we never hear because the audience is laughing too much. At what we have heard we have laughed until we are ill; by what we have missed—had we been but quiet—we must surely have been undone. It is sad at best to have lost such lines and their laughter, unbearably bitter to lose them by our own noisy folly. If these unheard sounds fail of the utmost exquisiteness of poignancy in later

memory, it is because we suspect that had their author willed it they might have been heard. He was the master of the scene and deliberately provoked the riot which destroyed the best part of his work. The artist has himself done what is more gracefully left to time or his wife.

The movie producer's device, however different in execution and effect, is in its broad technical aspects a comic form of the old tragic trick of contrived denial—of the Greek painting where the father's grief shows as greatest by being concealed behind his covering hands; or the unrepresented death of Milly Theale, all beautifully foreshadowed and echoed but not a word of it told. Such things are magnificent, our imagination has been respected, but they are not what we have bargained for. The workman whom we have hired has made us do too much of the job ourselves. As we are not experts we are never sure that we have done it quite right or that the result is of the best. We apply to the artist, if we understand his work at all, the rule that is a sound one for the legal draftsman: everything must be spelled out, nothing trusted to our imagination. There is an exact rendering of our taste in *A Star Is Born*, when the Hollywood crowd, less classic than that at Iphigenia's sacrifice, stares at the freshly widowed actress as she leaves the funeral parlor, and frustrated by her veil, asks her to show her stricken face.

The same completeness of performance which we demand of the artist once we see what his work is about, we demand also of the critic. If an author's work is readable, the critic must read the entire canon before he is permitted to speak. He should, so it is said, be in a position to trace his subject's full development, should see him as a whole. This requirement stands in the way of the appreciation of much that is good. For while it is a beautiful task to trace the figure in the carpet, it is an easier one if done on a scatter rug. It is an understandable and almost necessary critical doctrine (so long as the total work must be his concern) that they weave best who weave least. But the necessities of the critic make an arbitrary measure for determining the survival of the artist. How many writers live by what they have not written; how many suffer because what they have done well they have done too often.

So far from its being a pity, as Sir Walter Scott thought, that so gifted a creature as Jane Austen should have died so young, it has been her fortune. She left only six canonical novels—a small enough number for their titles, even their contents, to be remembered without recourse to a reference book; their identity of subject, the marrying of respectable young women, to constitute unity without monotony; their differences to be kept easily under critical control. Her external life is as perfect aesthetically as her work, an uneventful blank which no external research can fill. Napoleonic wars, Corn Laws, lovers, family, friends, are all trivial details explaining nothing. We come back always to her unex-

plained genius, which is only an elaborate way of saying that all we know of her, or that should concern us, is her work. The critic needs no apparatus to deal with her except his own intelligence; if this is supreme he has everything. She appears so easy to treat that every few years there is a book about her. These studies are always the occasion for pleasant well-turned reviews that have the happy air of great learning lightly worn. The readers of the reviews are delighted; a kingdom has been surveyed at a glance. Some even reread her, the arithmetic of the thing being so attractive: each book is a significant fraction of the total work.

As the smallness of Jane Austen's production gives it the appearance of fastidious artistry and keeps it alive, so the sheer bulk of Trollope makes us certain that he was a careless and slovenly workman and causes him to be largely neglected. Trollope's unfortunate admission in his *Autobiography* that he wrote so many words an hour and so many hours a day and that if he finished a novel before the end of his daily working time he began a new one the very same day, ruined his reputation. Without reading a line we are certain that such work must be crude and superficial; we know (but I am never quite sure how) that inspiration cannot possibly be as regular as clockwork. It is true that he could not have achieved his huge volume without his daily regularity, but this only proves that he wrote too much to be good.

Actually he needed space. For Trollope is not a serious marriage-broker, like Jane Austen; his interest in the virtuous female heart is rather superficial; the businesses in which he is really interested and which he really knows are those of being a bishop, poor clergyman, prime minister, farmer, civil servant, duke, stockbroker, foxhunting gentleman or lawyer—and these affairs demand fullness of presentation. A very large book, a much larger one than could probably get itself published, would be necessary for the adequate treatment of all of his work. Critical studies of individual authors tend to be of a size, just as atlases allot a page to each country no matter how much of the earth's surface it covers. The resulting differences in scale make the small subject stand out clearly, while the large one comes out crowded and confused. The critic does not have the atlas' obligation of universality—the principle of taste was invented to make him free of it—and may stay away from large countries. He finds Trollope (to use the words T. S. Eliot once applied to both Russia and the United States) "a large flat country which no one wants to visit."

The critic may entirely avoid a subject; but if he undertakes it at all, he must be universal in it. It will do him no good to know part of it. I have heard it said privately by people well qualified to speak (except for the fact that they have probably read only a dozen of Trollope's novels) that *The Small House at Allington* is one of the finest English novels of the nineteenth century—if only for the wonderful parallel,

never directly commented on by the author, between good and evil: a worldly villain jilts a girl in order to make a better marriage; a little clerk thrashes the villain to punish this betrayal, thereby gaining the moral courage himself to jilt a girl in order that *he* may make a better marriage; the villain's breach of promise is thoroughly despicable and his just undoing, the hero's admirable and his salvation. Such opinions cannot be put into print; the extent of the unknown makes it dangerous. In the three or four dozen unread novels there may be one, or ten, that make this story infantile; it may turn out that Trollope's forte was not English life, but Irish or French. So long as there is one person who has read every one of his novels, the professional critic is certain to have praised the wrong one. So that in the end very little is ever said in public; the old rule stands: a prolific writer is a bad one.

A usually unnoticed exception to the rule is our most dedicated artist, Henry James, who achieved mass production by adopting one of the methods of American business, dictating to a stenographer. He escapes the consequences of his efficiency by an odd accident in his history that has split him into two personalities, the early and the late, with the result that the burden of his work is divided between them. The flowing beard of the Sargent sketch of the seventies and the shaved Roman face of the later photographs physically set off the two Jameses as entirely different people (there may be three, if only for the sake of Guedalla's "James the First, James the Second and the Old Pretender"). The division was started—as Guedalla's witticism suggests—as a means of disparaging his later work, and also to give point to the charge that he had no right in later years to change his early stories. The old debauchee, it was said, had corrupted the text of the youthful *Daisy Miller*; some even spoke—it was in the twenties—of a revised virgin. But now the split is stressed by the Jacobites themselves to set apart his later work from everything else, including his own past. Any Jacobite will tell you that reading *Daisy Miller*, *The American*, and that sort of thing is not reading *real* Henry James. The early James is at most granted the grace of being the later's forerunner.

The part that accident has played in James' career may seem to be exaggerated; it is pleasant to think that careful work must survive and that quantity is no obstacle but merely allows for selection. Unfortunately for this notion, James' friend, Howells, was also a serious and devoted craftsman for more than half a century; nevertheless he has disappeared under the weight of some seventy volumes. No more than a few are being currently reprinted, and these are chiefly high school editions.

The principle of selection does operate, but it chooses for the most part the already scarce. We truly like what is rare, especially if we can avoid the act of choice ourselves. Early death is our most elegant arbiter, but almost any other mischance will do. These, like the Sybil with the Roman king, make up our minds for us.

All conventions restrict freedom and limit choice; this is never an argument against them. The conventions of critical knowledge with which we have been dealing do seem, however, to be open to the objection that they have nothing to do with criticism, but are in fact the customs of other trades misapplied to criticism. The fine arts have been too much confused with cookery or with crime, and the function of the critic with that of the food taster or the criminal court judge. I do not know whether our habits of speech are the cause or the consequence of this confusion, but we tend to take literally the figure, of which there are instances in these pages, of the critic tasting and either smacking his lips or making a wry face; or that of his pronouncing judgment after hearing the evidence as fully and fairly as justice requires. (It may be the simile of justice and our pride in our enlightened procedure which causes us to dismiss with a good character the work against which, because it is incomprehensible or lost, no evidence can be offered.) By the rules of either trade Mr. Agee's fault, if we may return to him so late, is serious: as a public taster it was his business to taste regardless of the risks to himself; as a judge he acted on hearsay, against all concepts of fairness.

Likening the artist to the cook or the criminal may be perfectly harmless as long as we keep ourselves straight on the true nature of criticism. The critic, it has been often pointed out, is primarily a practicing artist whose starting point happens to be a work of art rather than some other form of experience. How much of his subject he should know, and how he comes by his knowledge, are matters of his own methods of work; after all, we leave to other artists the determination of how much reality they should experience and what kind it should be. Each must observe and feel as he can; each must exercise his taste and judgment—the critic's use of them is only more explicit than that of other artists—to translate into his work the intensity and passion of what he has observed and felt. If the result is good, the method has been right; this is equally true if the work derives from life or from another work of art. Incidentally this is equally true if we look to the critic only for advice on what to see or read: our concern is whether by actual test we find it profitable to follow his advice, not how he came by it.

The critic in dealing with art is often led back to the life whence it came. The artist, try as he will to experience life directly, must in great measure derive from his predecessors, and inevitably his work must in large part be a comment on theirs. The difference between critic and artist is likely to be largely formal. However, if despite their resemblance, the critic is still considered to be a parasitical type of artist, then his efforts to live apart from his host (as in Mr. Agee's case) should have our encouragement.

The convention which permits a critic to praise what it is impossible for him to understand or even know, does at least recognize that

criticism is an imaginative occupation. It seems, however, unnecessarily one-sided; if the critic, instead of always regretting what we have missed, were allowed occasionally to rejoice at the thought of what—for all we know—we may have escaped, it might remove from criticism the unpleasant air of dreariness and humbug which sometimes hangs over it. Similarly it might be helpful if the critic were permitted to be a little more honest (never too much so) about how annoyingly hard a difficult author can be and how much too long a long one. If we only took these things a little more easily, our conventions would demand of the critic not knowledge, but skill and dexterity in the handling of his ignorance. For the critic, it is truer every day that art is long and life short. So much has the past heaped on him and so much is being added to it all the time that unless our present conventions of critical knowledge are relaxed, art will soon become the curse of criticism, its end, instead of—as it should be—its beginning.

POEM

Out of the Eden of their innocence
Of pain, like Eve to lonely gardening,
Children go boldly, full of ignorance
And the Alice-hearted's love of travelling;
Journey to giant hospitals, filled with toys
Which grown-up ladies in chess-man hats and boys
From the corner drugstore, up and down long halls,
Play house with silently (where are the dolls?)

Mother explains about the smells and noise,
Who nonetheless, like God, cannot explain
What is to come; for this our proper pain,
Remains unknowable, till the serpent's sting
Sings along each separate nerve and vein
The fine persuasion of his reasoning.

ARTHUR MIZENER

Books

POETRY IN WAR AND PEACE*

POETS ARE in the beginning hypotheses, in the middle facts, and in the end values. One looks from the new window and murmurs, like the lady who read *Alice*: "What a lie!" But in a quarter of a century even the chairs see through that window not a landscape but the Beautiful. So Miss Moore is reviewed not as a poet but as an institution—though not yet, like Auden, as an eleemosynary institution; one reviewer calls Miss Moore the greatest living poet and *Nevertheless* her best book, ending with the demand that she be placed in Fort Knox for the duration. Certainly she writes better poetry than any other woman alive; but I have used up my small share of the superlative in previous reviews of her—this time let me look through Miss Moore and see neither lies nor Beauty, but some trees. (Whoever you are, I like her as much as you; so don't complain.)

Miss Moore's method is analytic, an illogical atomism: the static particulars with which she operates are at the farthest level of abstraction from the automatically dynamic generalizations of the child or animal. The usual English accentual-syllabic metre produces in the reader the feel of the emotion or generalization *passing through* the particulars, a wave as real as the elements that compose it; Miss Moore's syllabics merely fix her specimens on their slides. She has said that the deepest feeling manifests itself in restraint, and certainly in her lines the crude natural rhythm of the primitive emotion has been restrained away to nothing. So her rhymes, rejecting the firm kinaesthetic confidence of the common English rhyme, force us to slow or stumble in our efforts to feel or even to find them. Everything combines to make the poem's structure visual and instantaneous rather than auditory and temporal, a state rather than a process. With some poets we are confused about where we began and where we ended, but are sure that we have been moved; with Miss Moore we know just where we are, but we stay there. Poetry has its own principle of Indeterminacy: if the position of something is fixed with the highest degree of accuracy, its movement cannot be. (Thus in Virginia Woolf, as in Hume, there is no "action": the sense data are a pack of cards which organize themselves into a game of poker—so we

*NEVERTHELESS. By Marianne Moore. Macmillan. \$1.25. THE WEDGE. By W. C. Williams. The Cummings Press. \$3.50. THE WALLS DO NOT FALL. By H. D. Oxford. \$2.00. FIVE YOUNG AMERICAN POETS: 1944. New Directions. \$3.00. LAND OF UNLIKENESS. By Robert Lowell. The Cummings Press. \$3.00.

are told; and there is as much brute credulity needed to work up her states into drama as there is, in Hume, to put impressions together into the precarious collocations we pretend are things.) In Miss Moore's poems even the animals' processes are habits, norms, and thus get the stability and finality of things. All her zoos are Egyptian.

How often Miss Moore writes about things (hers are aesthetic-moral, not commercial-utilitarian—they persist and reassure); or plants (how can anything bad happen to a plant?); or animals with holes, a heavy defensive armament, or a massive and herbivorous passivity superior to either the dangers or temptation of aggression (masks, in Yeats' sense, of Miss Moore). The way of the little jerboa on the sands—at once True, Beautiful, and Good—she understands; but the little shrew or weasel, that kills, if it can, two or three dozen animals in a night? the little larvae feeding on the still-living caterpillar their mother has paralyzed for them? We are surprised to find Nature, in Miss Moore's poll of it, so strongly in favor of Morality; but all the results are implicit in the sampling—like the *Literary Digest*, she sent postcards to only the nicer animals. In her poems the lion never eats Androcles—or anything else except a paste made of rotten apples. The virtuous individual is precariously, but necessarily and finally, safe; Miss Moore's poetry is one long set of variations on Socrates' *Nothing can happen to the good man*. Why do her animals never die? Because of the pre-established harmony in Adam Smith. Both her economic practice and moral theory repeat wistfully, *Laissez-faire, laissez-aller*. Poor private-spirited citizen, wandering timidly but obliviously among the monoliths of a deadlier age, will they never let you alone? To us, as we look skyward to the bombers, this urban Frost, the frequenter of zoos, calls *Culture and morals and Nature still have truth, seek shelter there*; and this is true; but we forget it beside the cultured, moral and natural corpse . . . At Maidanek the mice had holes, but a million and a half people had none.

Miss Moore's war poem, *In Distrust of Merits*, has been called the best war poem so often that it should be treated in detail.

The title is humility, not understanding—she distrusts her own merits, but trusts, accepts almost as if she were afraid to question, those of the heroic soldiers of her poem. She does not understand that they are heroes in the sense that the chimney-sweeps, the factory-children in the blue books, were heroes: routine loss in the routine business of the world. She sees them (the recurring triplet is the major theme of the poem) *fighting fighting fighting*; she does not remember that most of the people in a war never fight for even a minute—though they bear for years and die forever. They do not fight, but only starve, only suffer, only die: the sum of all this passive misery is that great activity, War.

Miss Moore thinks of the war in blindly moral terms. We are fighting "that where there was death there may be life." This is true, in

a sense; but the opposite is true in a more direct sense. She writes at the climax of her poem, "If these great patient/dyings—all these agonies/ and woundbearings and bloodshed/ can teach us how to live, these dyings were not wasted"; and she is certain that they were not wasted, and ends the poem with "Beauty is eternal/and dust is for a time." (The armies and the peoples died, and it meant that Beauty is eternal.) Since Pharaoh's bits were pushed into the jaws of the kings, these dyings—patient or impatient, but dyings—have happened, by the hundreds of millions; they were all wasted. They taught us to kill others and to die ourselves, but never how to live. Who is "taught to live" by cruelty, suffering, stupidity, and that occupational disease of soldiers, death? The moral equivalent of war! Peace, our peace, is the moral equivalent of war. If Miss Moore had read a history of the European "colonization" of our planet (instead of natural histories full of the quaint animals of those colonies) she would be astonished at nothing in the last world war, or in this one, or in the next. She should distrust us and herself, but not at the eleventh hour, not because of the war (something incommensurable, beside which all of us are good): she should have distrusted the peace of which our war is only the extrapolation. It is the peace of which we were guilty. Miss Moore's seeing what she sees, and only now, betrays an extraordinary but common lack of facts, or imagination, or *something*. But how honest and lovable—how genuinely careless about herself and caring about the rest of the world—Miss Moore seems in this poem, compared to most of our poets, who are blinder to the war than they ever were to the peace, who call the war "this great slapstick," and who write (while everyone applauds) that *they* are not going to be foolish enough to be "war poets." How could they be? The real war poets are always war poets, peace or any time.

For this poem Miss Moore has given up her usual method, because of the emotion and generality that have overwhelmed her. I wish that she had—as the world has—taken her little animals, her bric-a-brac with all their moral and aesthetic qualities, her individuals with their scrupulous virtues, and shown them smashed willy-nilly, tortured, prostituted, driven crazy—and not for a while but forever: that is, till the day they died. As it is she has handled not these real particulars but abstractions she is unfamiliar with and finds it hard not to be heroic about; and her poem is neither good nor bad, but a mistake we sympathize with thoroughly.

I don't want to finish my review of Miss Moore without saying what a good poet she is, and how lucky we are to have her.

William Carlos Williams is almost too much of a fact to be criticized. In the best of his poems the Nature of the edge of the American city—the weeds, clouds and children of vacant lots—and its reflection in the minds of its inhabitants, exist for good. His ironic (but certainly

correct) *Am I not/the happy genius of my household?* suggests the charm, honesty and rather astonishing limitations of his work. These limitations are neither technical nor moral but intellectual. (Even his good critical remarks sound as if they had been made by Henry Ford; his critical sense seems kinaesthetic, only intermittently conscious, so that he is unable, generally, to exploit his regular style for dramatic monologue, as he most effectively might.) His poems are, in a way, the diaries of another Sally Beauchamp; but the tough responsible doctor-half that says and does, the violent and delicate free-Freudian half that feels and senses, have their precarious connection in one of the great mythological attitudes of our country: Brooklyn, the truck-driver looking shyly at the flower. *In the suburbs, there one feels free*: his optimism comes not from closing his eyes to the serpents **but from strangling them**. He is young forever; so this optimism of ability and courage—touchingly wrong in the old Hercules, dying in his shirt of fire—is still precariously right for the young one. He is the America of poets.

The bombers came over H. D. as she was making (1) an apology for poetry in wartime (2) a theory of the primacy of theory over practice (3) a believing study of Egyptian religious machinery. The poem that combines the four is felt, queer, sincere, more than a little silly: the smashed unenclosing walls jut raggedly from the level debris of her thought (which accepts all that comes from heaven as unquestioningly as the houses of London). H. D. is History, and misunderstands a later stage of herself so spectacularly that her poem exists primarily as an anachronism: Churchill in his shelter-suit reading *The Battle of Britain*, the new poem of a Mr. Addison.

Miss Garrigue is much the best of New Directions' Five Young American Poets. Her poems often have the guaranteeing and personal queerness of a diary; her most successful (urgent dream-landscapes) are not the most promising. The poems seem to say: I don't exactly *believe* in modernism, but what else is there? Except myself? The *myself* is what we value. But she should ask herself: How much is sensibility worth?

Miss Merriam's poems are fluent, effective, full of emotion and reality—if one could suspend even the capacity for disbelief, and pretend that they are poems at all. Their aesthetic distance is negative; they are really pre-poetry, verse for Pavlov's dogs. *Lax, undone, like trembling legs of bride/spread wide and sweet/for him to enter in*: these are real toads in real gardens . . . Mr. Nims gets his methods from Shapiro, Auden and the rest, his matter from newsreels, and his principles of understanding from Maritain's textbook of philosophy (this is not a very nasty remark for people who have not read the textbook); his poetry has the efficiency and charm of one of Joyce's Jesuits. He and Miss Merriam are sisters under the skin, and both of them are flayed.

Tennessee Williams must be one of those hoaxes people make up to embarrass *Poetry* or *Angry Penguins*: no real person—no fictional one

except Humpty Dumpty—would say about poets, “For others, I know, the Army has offered a haven.” (That haven, Dachau.) If Tennessee Williams wrote more like W. C. Williams I should think him another of Laughlin’s pseudonyms; this would render a little more plausible the carefully fantastic localization of the poems: Darien, Gloucester, Santa Monica, Jacksonville, Washington, New Mexico, Vero Beach, Memphis, New Orleans, Boston, Manhattan, Acapulco, St. Louis, St. Augustine and Summer. The romany chal! Mr. Williams writes two prefaces, a Serious Version and a Frivolous Version; I have printed only a Frivolous Version of my criticism, but I assure his friends that they would not willingly exchange it for the other.

When it comes to poems in Spanish I am in the position of the orangoutang. Furness taught to say *Papa* and *cup*; Alejandro Carrión’s real productions can evoke from me only *Ah, si* or *¡Que lindo es Michoacán!*—the two phrases Mexico taught me to love or to pronounce. The translations are collocations of images and sentiments unexceptionable enough to remind one of the identity of indiscernibles, or of the Egyptian letters Gardiner mentions, where the reader understands every word and every sentence, but neither why they were written nor what they were intended to convey. One can be too neighborly.

Some of Mr. Lowell’s poems are so good (*The Drunken Fisherman* is the best poem in any of these books) and all are so unusual that it makes reviewing his book a pleasure. A “traditional” poet is one who uses the usual properties and images to say the usual things; Mr. Lowell, a really traditional poet, is sometimes able to exploit the resources of language and the world, for the organization of a poem almost exactly as some of the poets of the seventeenth century were able. His language is nouns and verbs and the necessary connectives, a few adjectives, next to no adverbs; its exceptional strength is in the strength of intensity, emotional and rhetorical, but in the intrinsic strength of language itself. Often he knows (as almost no contemporary poets know except in theory) that language at its strongest is *not* language that remains at the highest emotional and textural intensity as long as one can force it to; that sensibility is like money—good only for what it can buy; that the whole is what the parts are for. He has never been fooled into the vulgar belief in the separation (opposition, even) of the “connotative” and “denotative” functions of language—a belief that reaches its most primitive level of absurdity in Winters’ positively pre-Socratic view. Mr. Lowell’s essential source is early Milton; obvious but unimportant sources for a few details are Hopkins (*You are their belle/And belly too . . . Celestial Hoyden*) and Tate. What Mr. Lowell says could not have been said, guessed at, or tolerated before. His world is our world—political, economic and murderous—cruelly insisted upon, with all our green and pale hopes gone, their places taken by a blind

and bloody Heaven. (He has succeeded in making salvation seem as real, and almost as frightening, as damnation.) In these poems the blood of the martyrs is the creed of the Church; his Christ (named as one names Madonnas) is the Christ of the Tabloids. When over this coiling darkness there is a grave, indistinct and serene lightening of pity, one is more than usually moved. His world, his rhetoric and his beliefs are joined in an iron unity of temperament; in a day when poets aspire to be irresistible forces, he is an immovable object.

Of New England he has the grim affectionate knowledge one has of one's damned kin. Here are the *fearful Witnesses* who *fenced their gardens with the Redman's bones*; the clippers and the slavers, the seaman knitting at the asylum; the Public Gardens *where / The bread-stuffed ducks are brooding, where with tub / And strainer the mid-Sunday Irish scare / The sun-struck shallows for the dusky chub*; and here is *the faith / That made the Pilgrim Makers take a lathe / To point their wooden steeples lest the Word be dumb*. (These parodies of quotations, or slurred references to them, are sometimes a wonderful source of wit and depth, sometimes a senseless habit: *all manmarks from this world man never made*.) Here his harshest propositions flower out of facts. But his satires of present-day politics and its continuation often have a severe crudity that suggests Michael Wigglesworth rewriting the *Horatian Ode*; airplanes he treats as Tate does, only more so—he gives the impression of having encountered them in Mother Shipton. Several of his poems are harsh and arbitrary (though surprisingly realized and surprisingly felt) exercises “in the manner of” the seventeenth century. But most of these excesses seem temporary; what is permanently excessive is an obstinacy of temperament extreme enough to seem a form of violence.

Mr. Lowell's Christianity has nothing to do with the familiar literary—not to say economic—Christianity of *as if*, the belief in the necessity of belief: all that links *Time*, Auden, Werfel and the Caudillo in one believing band. He *is* a Christian, and consequently knows that Christianity is true, just as physicists used to know that physics is true. Among the usual rout of Catholic converts he looks like another John the Baptist, all zeal and hair; one would have said, *a priori*, that he is the ideal follower of Karl Barth. A few years ago he would have supported neither Franco nor the Loyalists; one sees him sending a couple of clippers full of converted minute-men to wipe out the whole bunch—human, and hence deserving. (I wish Mr. Lowell could cast a colder eye on minute-men. His treatment of the American revolution is in the great tradition of Marx, Engels and Parson Weems.) When the Roman Empire (in his *Dea Roma*) evolves into the Roman Catholic Church, there is a change in degree, but not in kind; in his poems the Church is, among other things, an overwhelming social-historical *fact*, a State as frightening as any secular one. (His imagery for it is always Bismarckian.) His religious poems are not the familiar bad new sort, but the

familiar good old sort, in terms of us and now; *The Drunken Fisherman* is as interesting and strange a piece of "religious" writing as any since *The Castle*. A good religious poem, today, is ambergris, and it is hard to enjoy it for thinking of all those suffering whales; but martyrs are born, not made.

Mr. Lowell is in a certain sense a poet's poet: properly to admire his command of those three horses you need to have tried to ride three horses yourself. Many of his phrases are memorable in that wonderful and unfashionable way in which some of Empson's are.

*When the ruined farmer beat out Abel's brains,
Our Father laid great cities on his soul.*

A man who can begin a poem like that can do anything. (In this case, alas, he can turn the poem into *Onward, Christian Soldiers*.) At his best Mr. Lowell is a serious, objective and extraordinarily accomplished poet. He is a promising poet in this specific sense: some of the best poems of the next years ought to be written by him.

RANDALL JARRELL

NOTES FOR A REVIEW

HENRY JAMES: THE MAJOR PHASE. *By F. O. Matthiessen. Oxford University Press. \$2.50*

1. A scrupulous, discerning study of James's later novels—*The Ambassadors*, *The Wings of the Dove*, and *The Golden Bowl*, as well as the two unfinished books—and a few of the later tales, partly from the point of view of the recently available notebooks, in which the germs of these works are to be found. Sensitive account of the manner in which they foliated from their sometimes scanty origins to the full, fragrant, richly-colored blooms they ended by being. Especially revealing on the *Wings*, which F. O. M. rightly regards as the most deeply-felt and most completely realized of the group.

2. Admirable discussion in Chap. III of J.'s use of symbols—as elsewhere, too, of his imagery. J. not a *symboliste* in strict sense, certainly not in the sense of French and other contemporary poetry, if only, as F. O. M. says, for his indifference to music—and, one might add, his innocence of any systematic transcendental metaphysics; nor, either, in the sense of such writers as Mann, Kafka, Joyce and Eliot. The symbol not for him the thing-in-itself, the very substance of the fable, but something reached "with the final development of his theme," to give concretion and beauty to his thought; its consummation, not its egg.

3. Importance of the book as another and very cogent answer to Brooks' and Parrington's criticism, which naturally is not defensible in its familiar, unmodulated form. Maintains, unanswerably, that only in this later phase did J.'s art attain its truest, most idiosyncratic perfection, and

his spirit express itself on a level with his deepest intuitions, his most nearly tragic finality. (Surely what J. lost in expatriation—and he lost something; that need not and cannot be denied—found wonderful compensation; perhaps he simply saved his skin as a functioning writer.)

4. Nevertheless, not at all an uncritical, blown-up over-estimate of these novels or of J.'s work as a whole, in the vein that threatens to become a fashionable orthodoxy. Recognizes the absence from even the great novels of some qualities that would (he implies) lift J. to the level of the Prometheans of modern fiction—not to plunge more deeply backward into the *coulisses* of literary history. The "attenuation" of Strether's desire for experience, "its passive rather than its active scope," "the inadequacy of his adventures"; the femininity of all J.'s emotional symbols; the sense in which Milly Theale is the sufferer rather than the actor (and hence no *protagonistes* in the developed Greek sense of that word), and the elegiac rather than tragic emotionality of the *Wings*; the failure, in the *Bowl*, to find an "objective correlative" really equal to the moral burden of the fable.

5. Necessity, surely, to push the analysis still further and more unsparingly. J.'s great achievement of understanding and revelation—even of compositional beauty—not safe with the mere idolaters. Let us avoid exploiting him in the interest of our own anxieties, our own revulsions from reality, our own inner poverty. Essential components of cardinal literature missing in him: (a) the toughest mastery of external, contemporary, historical and biological reality, and (b) the deepest and clearest, most unshrinking awareness of the inner abyss—or the "inner fountain" either—the fearful and hopeful nature of man, man the primate and the saint. J.'s work fully understandable only after a still more rigorous dual analysis, socio-historical at one pole, depth-psychological at the other. Importance for latter of Saul Rosenzweig's tentative discussion. Deep and crippling injury to the sources of social capacity and sexual realization certainly sustained by J. in early experience—resulting, no doubt, as S. R. argues, in repression of both sexuality and aggression. Highly ambiguous quality, then, of his relations with the outer and the inner world. Vacillation between acceptance and repudiation, between thirst for experience and shrinking from it, between the active and the passive role, between the male and the female principles. Hence the *relative* meagerness of his work as "history" (his own term): imagine his sharing Proust's passion for military science, or Mann's and Joyce's for medical learning, or Gide's for political exposure. Hence, too, the *relative* attenuation of his symbols for moral evil and moral heroism. His novels compensatory—and not in the highest sense—for vital frustrations, vital withdrawals from experience. His sense of evil (if Kate Croy and Charlotte Stant are its fullest embodiments) remains a shuddering perception rather than an unblinking gaze; his vision of

the good (if Milly Theale and Maggie Verver are its highest expressions) remains a tender, fastidious, singularly pure and beautiful ideal, but a tenuous, late Transcendental, and imperfectly substantial one.

6. Even his austere preoccupation with form impossible to discuss naively on its own terms. What was compulsive, compensatory, protective of the wounded ego, in that too. Remember Flaubert's remark to Louise Colet: "The very great men often write quite badly, and so much the better for them. One must look for formal perfection not in *their* work but in that of the secondary men."

7. Suggestive but unsatisfactory discussion in last chapter of J.'s *vues d'ensemble*. Why not confess that—compared with such men as Stendhal, Dostoevsky, Hardy, Proust, Mann—J. had little capacity for general ideas and that his work is really much less illuminated, much less toughened by them than the work of those others? . . . F. O. M. rightly feels that the view of life expressed in his books now seems inadequate to "both the religious man and the political and economic man," that there is no synthesis in them (as there was in his father's now archaic work) of the two orders of experience, and adds that "the next synthesis must be more rigorously based in both political economy and theology, in the theology that recognizes anew man's radical imperfection" and in an equalitarian politics. Quite impossible to follow F. O. M. here in the strangely wishful conviction that dogmatic theology can ever be reconciled with a revolutionary democratism, or ever prove anything but a stubborn barrier to the fuller humanization of man. J.'s freedom from such regressive delusions one of the secrets of his true strength. With a more masculine grasp, indeed, of "man's place in "nature" than he had, he might have been, as he is not, one of Flaubert's "very great men."

NEWTON ARVIN

"HE TOO HAS LIVED IN ARCADIA . . ."

THE WORLD OF WASHINGTON IRVING. *By Van Wyck Brooks. Dutton.*
\$3.75.

THE JOYS and pleasures and rewards which come to one in reading Van Wyck Brooks are so continuous as to require emphatic statement. His books often represent a triumph of style, which is not astonishing in the least, since his method of composition is confessedly that of anthologizing the golden passages of his authors, who are sometimes great masters of expression. If one has the proper—or improper—bias, one can regard the volumes of his literary history of America as an Arcadian idyl, the imagination and projection of what Brooks would like the literary life to be. This, I think, is the explanation of the pleasure one cannot fail to receive from his work.

But some pleasures are suspect. And other pleasures need not be suspected since we know that they are wrong, at least in the sense that they destroy the possibility of other and more wholesome pleasures. As soon as one comes upon a reference to a book or episode of which one has some real knowledge, pleasure is succeeded by irritation and the unpleasant realization that a prose style of unusual aptness has had the effect attributed to certain drugs, that of lulling to sleep the power to discriminate and making every perception delightful. It is by no means an accident that in *The Flowering of New England* some authors are often praised because they are *unconscious*, a word used so vaguely that it may have some psychoanalytic connotation, while it certainly is confused with the words *intuitive* and *spontaneous*. It is not necessary to overrate consciousness or the intellect in order to be distressed by the praise of being unconscious. When a critic begins to praise authors for such reasons, of which this is but one example, a true decadence has occurred. The fact that the critic hurls the accusation of decadence at many other authors does not alter or modify the literal fact: there is in Brooks a yearning for a more primitive state of being and of letters—a yearning characteristic of every decadent author.

In *The World of Washington Irving*, as in the previous volumes of Brooks' literary history, the euphoria induced by the prose style, the use of images of nature, the pleasant anecdotes and charming epigrams, is from time to time arrested by the intrusion of reality. Poe suffered from a profound neurosis, John Randolph was impotent, Irving suffered from abysmal nervous depression: the mellifluous style cannot wholly prevent Brooks' passing allusions to these difficulties from waking the reader to a sense of reality. So, too, in coming upon a discussion of Jefferson or Aaron Burr, the poor charmed half-ignorant reader may remember that Burr was probably the consummate example of a lack of scruples in the history of America, and that one of his victims was Jefferson, who became President only over the dead body of whatever was left to Burr's pretensions to minimal honesty; as well as what was soon to be Hamilton's dead body.

But it is pointless to invoke questions of fact, since an uninformed reader, a man from China or from Mars, might very well read this new book without knowing anything or finding out anything about the War of 1812, the struggle which culminated in the Civil War, the conflict between colonialism and nationalism, or, to return to individuals, the degradation of Poe ending in a drunken death. To bring up such matters is perhaps to commit the sin of muckrakers, a sin which resembles Brooks' only in inaccuracy. And, in any case, it should be confessed that such references are called forth by Brooks' recent attacks on Joyce and Eliot, who seemed to him to be muckrakers and "sick Jesuits." But to an admirer of Joyce and Eliot, Brooks' point of view is that of a Pollyanna with a talent for style.

Brooks does not have a false sense of reality. He knows about the age of Hitler, he once proposed that Hitler's burning of books be avenged by a like burning of German books. But Brooks' efforts, which only an author of genius could accomplish, are directed to creating a false image of reality. It would be very pleasant, if life and literature resembled Brooks' version. How easy it would be to survey the period of 1929-1939—the world of Herbert Hoover, or the world of Josef Stalin—and to produce an image of week-ends in the country, the winning of Pulitzer Prizes, testimonial dinners, favorable reviews, the exchange of complimentary letters, the beauty of the T.V.A., the leisure of the W.P.A., the liberation of the Scottsboro boys, the profound literary culture of Walter Duranty when he compared the Moscow Trials to Dostoyevsky, the increasing interest in literature in America which became plain in the sales of Margaret Mitchell, Hervey Allen and Thomas Mann.

What a beautiful world! what a beautiful culture! And if the quality of life has seemed otherwise, if, to some, neither systematic optimism nor pessimism seem adequate, if the literary life from the time of Irving until the time of Brooks seems full of difficulty, conflict, unhappiness, frustration, misunderstanding, false recognition and false disparagement, sectarian struggle, national tragedy, personal tragedy and mighty poets in their misery dead—if these things seem representative, perhaps it is the fault of one's point of view. Certainly it would be wonderful if Brooks' view were true. But it is untrue.

DELMORE SCHWARTZ

NOSTALGIA AND EXPERIMENT

NEW DIRECTIONS 8 (1944). *Edited by James Laughlin, New Directions.* \$3.50.

MR. LAUGHLIN, in his introduction to the 1944 *New Directions* anthology, once more reasserts experimentalism as a criterion of choice. Judging from the quality of the North American section, it seems doubtful whether "experimental literature" is at present particularly valid. An experiment in the arts is, after all, something which is being tried out in the hope that it will be accepted, that it will work. If it does not, it is forgotten. Now the experiments of the twenties and early thirties which were the outcome of a real spiritual ferment, gave rise, as Mr. Laughlin says, to new forms and shaped certain major writers. The temper of the forties, however, is entirely different—we are apparently passing through a period of stagnation, there is a sort of concerted hush in which everyone is waiting for something to happen. If there are to be new movements, they have not yet begun and perhaps will not begin until after the war. Spiritual and ideological problems have not been

posed in a new way and until they are we shall have statements in terms of established forms but nothing worthy of the name of movement.

This being the case, Mr. Laughlin's experiments are rather nostalgic, not new directions but merely survivals. It is hard not to conclude that writers who continue to produce nothing else have simply failed to mature. Mr. Laughlin, himself, in his preface speaks authoritatively concerning things about which he obviously knows little—witness his charming faith in something like social credit as a cure for the ills of the world. A more characteristic case in point is Paul Goodman. Immensely talented, he always promises more than he achieves; one has the feeling that he has become a professional New Directions writer.

Despite these reservations, there is a place for a collection like this one. As long as creative work of integrity is backed up against the wall by the machinery of mass production and the merchandizing system of quantity at the expense of quality, there can never be enough outlets for sincere writing. It is to be hoped, however, that Mr. Laughlin will reconsider his standards of selection.

In discussing a collection of this sort it is impossible to avoid cataloguing. Let us, therefore, divide a few goats from the sheep.

Klein's poetry indicates that Joyce is now being read in Canada.

Kramer's burlesques of hearings on bills are not as funny as actual quotes from such hearings.

There seems to be no reason for reading the prose of either Meyer Liben or C. Dilworth.

Brinnin continues to uphold the tradition of dullness to which he has already made notable contributions.

Patchen has just discovered Guillaume Appolinaire's *Calligrammes*.

R. Y. Zachery—more of the pretentious philosophizing which lately seems to do duty for poetry.

June Cannan—more of the incoherent symbolism which lately seems to do duty for poetry.

One conclusion to be drawn from the forgoing is that there is little readable American poetry in the volume. This is perhaps symptomatic of the present state of poetry in the United States. There are, however, a few contributions that are more rewarding.

Rexroth's long associative meditation on man and society has agreeable passages. It is doubtful if the whole has sufficient tension to remain continually on the level of poetry.

Maud Hutchins' play, *The Case of Astrolabe*, is wholly charming for its lyrical and metaphysical wit.

Chauncey Hackett's freudian fantasy, while not new, is successfully ironical.

W. C. Williams contributes a poem which is typical and satisfying Williams.

Weldon Kees has a group of poems notable for a well sharpened

scalpel. Kees manages to be a satirist and remain a poet. At a time when poetry is determinedly solemn, the more Kees the better.

Allan Dowling—aphorisms which come off.

Tennessee Williams is represented by a play that indicates unusual talent. In theme and attitude it suggests Jeffers—incest treated in this way is somewhat dated. The verse, however, is much better than Jeffers—precise and intensely felt. If Williams' full length plays are as good as this, it is to be hoped that he will eventually be victorious over the entrenched cloak and suiters of Broadway.

New Directions' Spanish American collection is a hit or miss affair. We have such things as the charming *Man Who Resembled a Horse* by Arévalo Martínez, which is already a classic, an unimpressive story by Alfonso Reyes, a symbolist poem by Mareschal which dates back to Mallarmé. Since there is plenty of Neruda already available, there seems to be no reason to keep republishing some of the same poems which have already appeared elsewhere. The Afro-Cuban translations are a disgrace. The dialect of the Cuban Negroes does not differ particularly from the dialect of the Cuban people (spoken even by the educated) hence there is no reason for these Sambo vulgarizations. If Mr. Mallan had ever listened attentively to a Cuban dance band he would never have distorted the rhythms and the phrasing in this way. Most of the poets included have written a few lyrics and are now silent. Guillén alone of the school has developed into a major artist but these paraphrases only conceal him from the North American public.

García Lorca is a writer of such brilliance that even his slightest and most fugitive pieces are not disappointing. He was always at home in short ballad forms and the later poems, here included, reveal him returning to the nature symbols which are not descriptions of nature but descriptions of the poet. Mr. Honig's translations are accurate and pedestrian. He makes no attempt to catch the fluttering dance of the octosyllabic line with its feminine endings. Even so, the images retain their sparkle. Honig does better with the playlets and the prose piece. *Santa Lucia and San Lázaro* is the sort of impressionist essay which can so easily become mere prose for the sake of prose. García Lorca makes everything he describes shine with a new light. The puppet farce with its impudent slams at the commercial theater is a splendid example of the poet's method of transforming a folk form into a lyrical ballet. One is reminded of the work of some of the early Elizabethans. It is tragic that perhaps the best equipped dramatic poet of our day was cut off before he fully mastered the medium of the theater. At any rate, one is grateful to Mr. Laughlin for giving us more García Lorca. Perhaps this section alone justifies the anthology.

H. R. HAYS

THE FEAR OF LITERATURE

THE SHAPE OF BOOKS TO COME. By J. Donald Adams. Viking Press.
\$2.50

THE PUBLISHERS of this work speak of J. Donald Adams as "one of America's foremost literary critics," and there is an important sense in which they are right. Mr. Adams was the editor of the *Times* literary supplement for eighteen years, between 1925 and 1943, and thus was as powerful as any man can be in determining what books were to be regarded as notable, significant and worthy of extended reviews. Yet in another important sense Mr. Adams was not a literary critic at all; the effect of his editorship cannot be discerned in a single instance: no work can be said to have been raised from oblivion and given lasting attention because of his functioning as an editor. Here then is a strange accomplishment—the accomplishment of nothing at all while occupying a position of great power. Everyone read the *Times Book Review*, but no one remembers the books praised in the *Times* because they had been praised in the *Times*. Most of the best-sellers between 1925 and 1943 are as dead as the Pharaohs; all that remains of Mr. Adams' editorship is the memory of ineffable reviews written by Percy Hutchinson, Eda Lou Walton, Edith H. Walton and Peter Monro Jack.

The interested reader of Mr. Adams' volume will soon come to suspect that this critic does not really like books at all. Books are disturbing; such is the reason for his dislike of Joyce, for example; but the true key to Mr. Adams' attitude appears when he writes of classic authors, who are no longer present to utter the naked truth. For instance, he quotes Thoreau's famous statement, "Most men lead lives of quiet desperation," and labels it a "striking half-truth"; and Shakespeare's cynicism, skepticism and despair are acceptable to him only because this phase is succeeded by the "serenity of the final period." Does not this make it clear that *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale* would have been given the highest praise in the *Times*, while *Macbeth* and *King Lear* would have been received with regret? The fact is (as Mr. Adams' title shows) that he has placed his hope of a satisfying literature in books not yet written, in books of the future, in books he had not yet read. These unseen books alone conform to the standards he avows, standards which may be reduced to one imperative—a wholesome view of life. This excludes works like *Gulliver's Travels* or *Hamlet*, for one author wrote as his epitaph, "Savage indignation shall lacerate his heart no more," and the other author's philosophy has been stated without contradiction as being: Duncan is dead in his grave.

JOSEPH HANNELE GOLDSMITH

MISS PORTER'S NEW STORIES

THE LEANING TOWER AND OTHER STORIES. By Katherine Anne Porter. Harcourt, Brace. \$2.50.

IT HAS for a long time been apparent that Katherine Anne Porter consistently writes a luminous prose, of an exactness of choice and suggestiveness of phrasing, which is altogether extraordinary. Miss Porter's work has probably been subjected to the kind of scrutiny that most writers hardly dare to hope for, rarely achieve, and can almost never withstand. That Miss Porter can bear such careful reading proves her much more than simply an excellent stylist. Even at their slightest, even when as in this, her latest collection, she has written stories which at first glance seem to be little more than self-indulgent puffs of nostalgia, she holds so fast to reality, there is so much heart in her accuracy, that the stories spread out beyond the bare meanings of the words and the incidents related, to become authoritative and substantial images of an entire society.

Though there are no stories in this volume as first-rate as her previous best, and the group has none of the unified impact, the impressiveness of the earlier books, her essential qualities of purity and delicacy are again revealed. It is difficult to trace the literary influences that have shaped her writing; whatever of them she has found useful, she has absorbed; there has been a transmutation of elements; she continues to speak in her own voice, clear, straightforward, serene.

Miss Porter moves freely in a number of realms; her sensibility has not impelled her to breathe only in a rarer atmosphere; she is *of* the world, its objects are her familiars, she recognizes them and enjoys them for what they are, knows their place in our lives. Her imaginative power springs from her alert sense of the actual. Though as "feminine" a writer as Virginia Woolf, she could hardly be more different from her in this. She has avoided neither squalor nor evil in their many aspects. To watch the ways of human beings is to witness too many horrors, and Miss Porter has not been afraid to look at anything, nor to tell what she has seen, and a straight categorical account of the betrayals, thefts, murders, hatreds and terrors in her stories would make her out another James Cain. What lifts her every time is love; not love that sentimentalizes corruption, but love that gives her a sad wisdom even as it carries her to joyousness. In the face of ugliness she neither becomes hard nor succumbs to the bald jargon of the amateur analyst. She utilizes her knowledge in the ways of art. Her tone undergoes the subtlest of alterations with her theme; and if she does not shock us it is because she knows how to prepare us. She properly leaves the sensationalism to the lesser artists, herself using a stricter method, which is more admirable even where it does not altogether succeed, and which makes it possible to contemplate a page of her writing, come upon unexpectedly, with a sense of peace.

GERTRUDE BUCKMAN

Variety

A Defense of the Thriller

THE LITERATURE of crime has recently begun to attract a more serious kind of critical attention. Hitherto it has existed, as it were, in the servants' quarters, tolerated but not allowed to dine with the gentry. But as serious novels have become worse and crime novels better there are signs that even the more learned critics are becoming uneasy. To cite two recent discussions, Mary McCarthy in *PR* and Edmund Wilson in *The New Yorker* have both sternly ordered the *roman policier* to go back where it came from. To the writer it seems that both of these critics have missed the point. Mr. Wilson has not read any of the better books in the field and consequently tries to prove by Agatha Christie that the detective story has not advanced. Now it is true that there is a mass of pedestrian whodunits which are strictly formula. These novels have nothing to do with literature. They are read by addicts who have everything in common with crossword puzzle fans. To expect this kind of puzzle book to advance is like expecting the game of chess to advance. Some of the whodunits add real characterization in terms of comedy of manners (such as Ngaio Marsh at her best) but these novels differ from the new type of crime story which threatens to break out of the genre

and achieve a more serious kind of statement.

Miss McCarthy is concerned with the latter tendency but she is against it. One suspects she is against it because she is a connoisseur of the orthodox whodunit and, like all specialists, wishes to keep the genre pure. She certainly does not prove her charge that Graham Greene's serious qualities are ersatz. Carefully avoiding his two best books, *Brighton Rock* and *The Labyrinthine Ways*, the core of her argument seems to be that Greene uses melodrama which he does not make "plausible." This is an unfortunate word. Kafka's plots are not plausible but they have profound meaning. A more valid charge against the novels which Greene specifically labels "entertainments" is that he does not fuse the story as a whole with the incidental implications which he draws from it. In isolated scenes meaning and form are merged but the denouement of the intrigue tends to be mechanical and one feels a letdown of serious intent. Instead of regarding this as ersatz, however, this kind of book can just as well be considered transitional. One can conclude that the thriller is beginning to change.

Now there is one quality which all the subspecies of the crime story possess in common and that is dramatic form. The psychological

murder novel, the escape thriller, the spy thriller and some of the better whodunits all have this impact. The mysterious attraction which both Mr. Wilson and Miss McCarthy have missed and which accounts in a great measure for their popularity, is that "you cannot put them down." From this point of view the humble crime story raises the problem of the relation between the drama and the novel.

In the writer's opinion, the naturalist-symbolist novel has about come to the end of its rope. The three great figures of modern times, Joyce, Proust and Mann, are all undramatic. They have loosened the structure of the novel until it sprawls like an encyclopedia and, like encyclopedists, they have sacrificed economy to comprehensiveness. They tend to abandon cause and effect structure for thematic textures which have more in common with music than narration. They avoid the climactic event and chronicle representative detail with scientific attentiveness; their characters are superlatively average enlarged by complex mechanisms of symbols. Finally, characters are presented by exposition or in terms of sensation. A point is reached where this type of novel practically dispenses with a story—Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* and *Finnegans Wake* are the reductio ad absurdum of the whole trend.

But drama, like murder, will out. In debased form the thriller has always preserved certain fundamental elements of the theatre. In the

first place it deals with murder or peril of death, themes which have always been the stuff of drama. From the Greeks down crimes of violence have always raised moral problems, problems involving both the individual and the community which force the participants to make judgments and act upon them.

Secondly, insignificant though the crime story has been, it has projected character dramatically, in terms of actions, while the reader participates in judging the significance of these actions.

Thirdly, the crime story or thriller is based upon suspense (an essential element in all western drama with the exception of Brecht's epic theatre). There are, of course, various kinds of suspense. There is the purely mechanical sort in which we are supposed to wonder who knocked out the detective when the lights went out. But there is also gradual revelation of character which forces the reader to suspend and modify his judgment and also the suspense obtained when a foreseen action approaches while the reader is helpless to prevent it. These last are legitimate drama. Creon and Antigone alternately convince us; we are alternately convinced and doubtful of the suspect's guilt as we interpret his behavior, alternately for and against the police—the process is the same. Likewise we await the death of Clytemnestra and the murder in *Hangover Square* with similar helpless fascination.

It will be objected that the crime story is a degenerate form of dra-

ma, a mere decadent survival. This is probably true of nine tenths of the output. That more talented writers have begun to practice the genre is quite possibly a healthy sign. To modify a form which contains useful elements but which has not been exploited for more serious ends is just as worthwhile an experiment as creating new forms.

The temper of the past artistic generation was unpolitical and introspective. Today we live in a political age whose tensions show no sign of lessening. Moreover the texture of life is unusually thick with violence. It would seem reasonable that contemporary novelists should be driven in the direction of drama, that their response to the current necessity for making judgments may take the form of a new interest in the thriller. Indeed the relation between the individual and society which is perhaps the most basic problem of our time is concretely symbolized in the concept of crime and punishment, for this relationship becomes dramatic when either the individual or society transgresses against the other.

Although the new type of crime literature does not yet include any great masterpieces there have been some interesting performances. For sheer skillfulness in getting effects the better authors in the field are unsurpassed. Raymond Chandler gives us ironic, hard-boiled studies of corruption, like *The High Window*, which imply a criticism of the American scene somewhat similar to *Sanctuary* (in itself a superior crime story). *A Coffin for Demetrios* is a thriller with politico-

social implications. *Hangover Square* is a chronicle of a fatal passion with overtones of social criticism. Graham Greene in his really important novel, *The Labyrinthine Ways*, uses the escape story pattern to make a profound comment on persecution. *The Seventh Cross* is the same form used as a criticism of German society.

After all, Dostoievsky has proven conclusively that the crime story genre can be made into a work of art. Since it is currently showing a new vitality, critics would do well to recognize its virtues instead of trying to drive it back to the ignominy from which it aspires to rise.

H. R. HAYS

A Literary Provincial

THE literary historians have taken all literature as their province and have failed to grasp particular works very well for that reason. Yvor Winters has reversed the process and taken one province of literature for the whole of it.

This province was once lyric poetry of a certain kind; and Winters still maintains that a good lyric poem is inherently better than any other literary work. But it is the element of moral evaluation in a literary work which has come to mean more and more to Winters. In *The Anatomy of Nonsense*, Winters proves by the use of what he takes to be a moral criterion that the later writing of Henry Adams, the poetry of Wallace Stevens, the poetry and the criticism of T. S. Eliot and the criticism of John Crowe Ransom are for the most part valueless if not actually sinister. These writers, declares Winters, affirm a view of life and literature which leads to confusion, bad poetry, and, by an implication which becomes explicit at

one point, to evil behavior. This point is reached when Winters permits himself to conjecture that the suicide of Mrs. Henry Adams was "the logical outcome" of Henry Adams' own confusion of mind.

In one or another way, Adams, Stevens, Eliot and Ransom all counsel an abandonment of both mind and will to the search for intense excitement or to absolute despair. They preach a surrender to the difficulties of modern life. They are determinists and relativists when they are not merely contradictory.

To prove his thesis, Winters engages in logic-chopping, misquotation, and a simple failure to understand the meaning of the words he is quoting. One important instance, important because it is necessary to a whole section of seven pages entitled "Autotelic Art," occurs in the essay on Eliot. The quotation from Eliot is as follows: "I have assumed as axiomatic that a creation, a work of art, is autotelic; and that criticism is about something other than itself." And then Winters' comment is: "Art, then, is about itself, but this answer does not help me to answer my question since I do not understand it." The admission of inability to follow Eliot's meaning is apparently intended as a piece of Socratic irony, yet it is clear that Winters actually permits the context to misinterpret for him the term, autotelic. For there follows a long and detailed refutation of Eliot, all based on the illusion that Eliot had said a work of art was *about* itself, and not simply that it was an end

in itself, or containing its own end in contradistinction to criticism, which is auxiliary to the work of art. *The error becomes less excusable* when one sees that Winters later quotes a passage by Eliot in which autotelic is plainly defined: which leaves one to wonder just how much of a quoted passage Winters takes the trouble to read before he proceeds to the attack.

This is but one example, yet it is typical of Winters' use elsewhere in this new book, of quotations which have been taken out of their context. But the example has a further significance, for the passage in question appeared in a literary review two years before its appearance in a volume. Hence one is teased with two apparent alternatives again: either no one knew that Winters had misunderstood a word on which a whole argument depended; or no one dared to tell him. There is much in Winters' tone throughout and in the letters he writes attacking his critics to suggest that he is not one who will brook correction of any kind.

One suspects that Winters has his eye on posterity. His favorite word is *great*. He uses it hundreds of times in his three books of criticism, usually with reference to one or two lyrics, and always with a dramatic assurance which makes it sound like cannons going off. At the same time he shows a consistent preference for obscure works, minor poets, and poems hot off the typewriter, lavishly bestowing the laurel on his newly discovered favorites.

By applying his own moral bias to literature, Winters deduces the

greatness of a handful of great lyrics by a dozen great lyric poets; and this greatness is placed against the failures of T. S. Eliot and James Joyce. He says of Eliot that his poems "display charming or excellent lines here and there," and his references to *Finnegans Wake* have little relation to its actual qualities. That the work of Eliot and Joyce in particular might represent a profound search of consciousness, and an effort to illuminate depths of the human mind, thereby liberating human beings from compulsions and fears that prevent their functioning as free moral beings—this possibility is not examined by Winters.

In his essay on Emerson, Henry James remarked that the New England conscience was often a clue without a labyrinth. This witty statement not only is an excellent description of James' problem as a novelist, namely, to find adequate labyrinths, but it leads us forward to Winters' California version of the New England conscience. Winters has clues and he plunges into labyrinths. But the clues do not apply to the labyrinths in which he searches, as can be seen by examining Winters' attack on Eliot's poetry and criticism. He writes of Eliot as if he were dealing with Prince Hamlet; the clue to Eliot's literary theory is his denial of the freedom of the will; the clue to Eliot's versification is Ezra Pound.

Winters' basic fallacy is the confusion of an act of evaluation with an act of moral choice. He supposes that the act of apprehending the

nature of any experience must involve the act of evaluating it and the act of making a moral choice with regard to it. By this triple confusion, Winters arrives at the conviction that the real test of a work of art is the degree of moral judgment which it manifests either implicitly in its feeling and tone, or explicitly in the author's attitude toward his subject. The number of leaps involved so far are difficult to count, but an analogy might be of some use: it is as if one could not write a treatise on metaphysics without also writing one on ethics at the very same time; and as if one could not recognize a given tree as an elm without at the same time evaluating it with respect to other trees and other human beings and also making a moral choice in which one decided how the experience of looking at a tree was to be regarded in the ordering of our lives. This moral doctrine is supported by a good many quick solutions to what Winters entitles "Preliminary Problems"; the chief solution is the one in which Winters passes quickly from connotation to feeling to motive, all involved in the poetic use of language. Since the three occur together for Winters, poetry always deals with a motive and thus is always moral or immoral, mostly immoral.

On this moral basis, a deductive system erects itself with ease. Certain literary forms are inherently better than others because they are more susceptible to the expression of moral feeling. Thus meter is a more sensitive register for moral feeling than prose and the heroic

couplet is *in the abstract* superior to iambic pentameter because the close rhyming makes possible a more exact expression of moral feeling. Proceeding in this way, with little caution and no doubts, Winters proves that Edith Wharton is superior to Henry James, T. Sturge Moore and Robert Bridges are better poets than Yeats and Eliot, and Wallace Stevens is a hedonist.

Winters' choices of great modern poems are significant in the sameness of their subjects; again and again, some statement or hint in the midst of a well-described landscape that man is a rational animal wins his favor, provided that it is neatly written in quatrains. And it is in dealing with subject-matter

that Winters exhibits the worst kind of didacticism. In his attack on Eliot, he becomes overwrought about the idea that a literary work ought to hold up a mirror to nature and to the age in which it is written. The trouble is that Winters takes this to mean that the purpose of a literary work is *merely* to give *representation to the Zeitgeist* or to the surface of an age. What Winters fails to see is how the opposite process is in question. An author's use of particulars and surfaces is an effort to support his leading attitudes and motives by giving them deep roots in experience. Without such roots, the author is guilty of what James called "the platitude of mere statement."

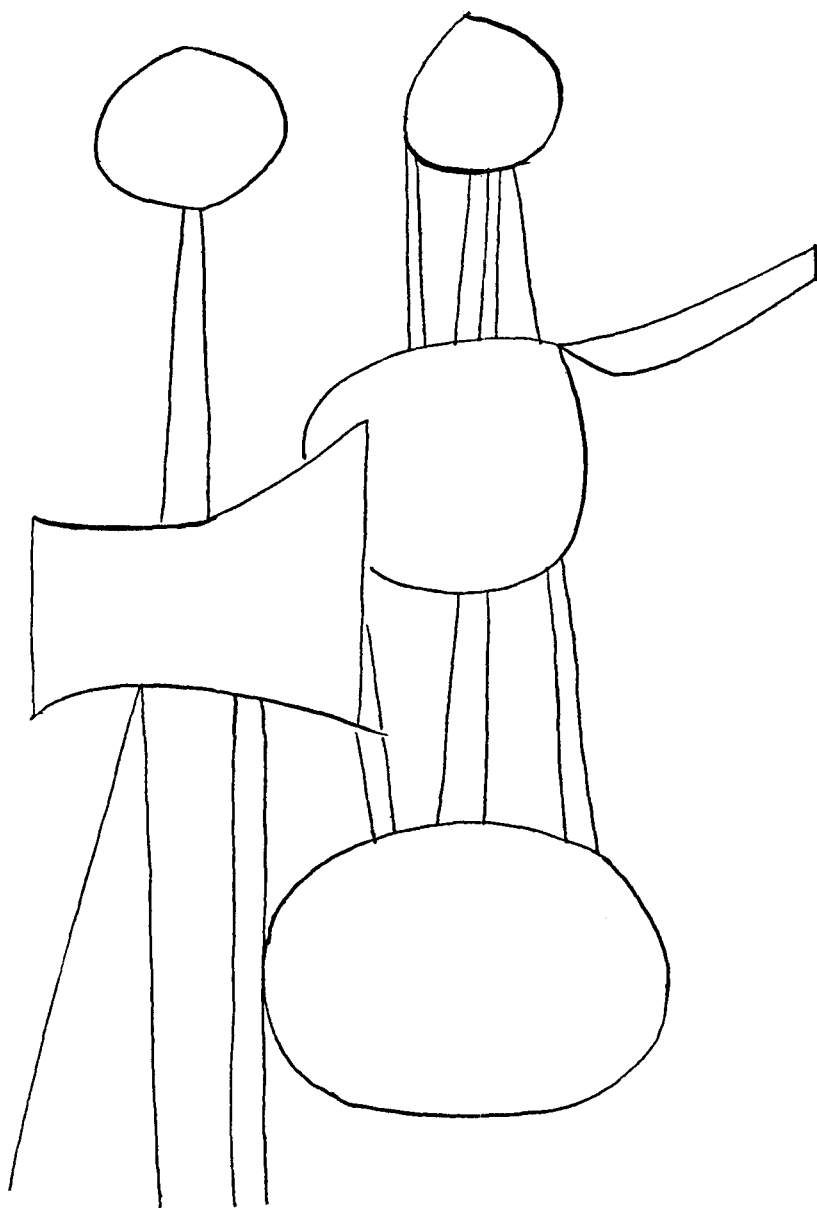
The point is a crucial one and one which enters profoundly into

our experience of literature. For example, the superiority of Shakespeare to Spenser can be formulated in terms of this ability to support the theme of a work by an ample use of the actual. This is what is meant, in *Ulysses*, by the statement that "the fundamental question about a work of art is from how deep a life does it spring," although A. E., to whom the sentence is attributed, probably meant the opposite of what Joyce did. Or, again Henry James must be cited: "There is, I think, no more nutritive or suggestive truth than that of the perfect dependence of the "moral" sense of a work of art on the amount of felt life concerned in producing it." It is this essential dependence that has escaped Winters.

That is why he is able to condemn *The Waste Land*. What his view comes to, in the end, is a preference for the correct platitudes of statement: and this is just where his predecessor Irving Babbit soon arrived.

But it should also be said that Winters has such intense love of literature that even when he is utterly wrong in his theories or opinions, his very love and intensity help the reader to a more intimate knowledge of the subject. One reader at least will now never forget what autotelic means; and more importantly, Winters' very excesses of judgment by their rhetorical bang and boom make one read neglected authors such as Edith Wharton and Henry Adams as a historian.

DELMORE SCHWARTZ



Courtesy Nierendorf Gallery, New York

ROBERT MOTHERWELL: Drawing. Ink, 1945.